



*The Gleaner 2012-2013*









Established 1901

Delaware Valley College  
Doylestown, Pennsylvania

**Co-Editors**

David Clement  
Rachelle Swafford  
Becca DiFabbio

**Publication Advisor**

Dr. Karen Schramm







## 2012-2013 Gleaner Staff

Cameron Lee  
Mimi Hanrahan  
Mikaela Cole  
Terrance Osborne

### Photo Credits

Front Cover: Anna Lubas  
Inside Front Cover: Mikaela Cole  
Inside Back Cover: Ashley Palkowetz  
Back Cover: Allison Shiffer

Special Thanks to the Following:  
Dr. Linda Maisel for coordinating the  
Gleaner High School Writing Competition

Mr. Barry Denlinger and  
MB Marketing & Communications, Inc. for their generosity

Mr. Hank F. Fox and Fox Bindery, Inc.,  
for their time and generosity.



*This speech was delivered by President Joseph S. Brosnan on Oct. 4, 2012 at the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia. The occasion was the kickoff dinner for Delaware Valley College's \$50 million fundraising campaign. The speech has been edited slightly.*



My purpose this evening is to tell you that the future of Delaware Valley College is in your hands.

When you leave here tonight, I expect it to be even deeper and stronger in your hearts.

There have been many important milestones in the 116-year history of Delaware Valley College, and tonight is one of them. I am very grateful to be here tonight to share this moment with you.

I'm often asked what it was about the College that motivated me to leave Columbia University and come to Doylestown.

The answer I always give is that there are three major attributes that attracted me to Del Val:

Its mission.

Its people.

Its potential.



First the mission.

Del Val's mission is unique and relevant to today's world and because of that it enables us to provide our students with the knowledge and experience to tackle the most important issues of our time.

Let me be specific about this because I agree with Jim Trainer that the College is in the right place at the right time.

Del Val is important to the future of this country and the world because it is addressing such critical issues as:

- how to feed a world population exceeding 7 billion and growing.
- how to secure adequate supplies of water for drinking and irrigation.
- how to keep the air clean.
- how to secure new sources of energy.

Del Val is addressing these issues as part of the College's curriculum. This commitment is not some fad that will be gone tomorrow.

I was also attracted to the quality and commitment of our faculty and staff and the nurturing environment they provide our intelligent and enthusiastic students.

This commitment is an attribute that has been part of the College's DNA from the very beginning!

When you couple these assets with our beautiful campus located in historic Bucks County proximate to the Boston/ New York/ Philadelphia/Washington Corridor, I couldn't help but be energized by the College's potential.

After a number of conversations and visits, I determined that this was the place where I wanted to spend my future.

Fortunately for me I was selected to become your 12<sup>th</sup> President.

I joined Del Val knowing there was plenty of work ahead.

The internal problems were substantial but fortunately we have a good handle on most of them now.

However, there were and are external challenges lurking as well. They come in several forms and are threatening higher education everywhere.

Consider these:

- It has become increasingly difficult to finance a college education, with student debt topping \$1 trillion nationally.
- This debt has led to increased pressure on colleges and universities to keep costs down and financial aid up. Del Val is no exception.



- There are increasing societal challenges being made to the relevance and necessity of a college degree. “Why college?” is a common refrain these days.
- Because of a demographic shift – the baby bust – there are fewer college-bound students coming out of high schools, making it increasingly difficult to enroll quality students.
- The digital world and new forms of information delivery are quickly making the old higher ed academic model obsolete.
- Government has increasing doubts about the effectiveness of higher education and is seeking more oversight, regulation and the measurement of somewhat arbitrary outcomes.

Despite all these issues, I remain optimistic.

I’m optimistic because of you, and because the College’s history and tradition has made it resilient and strong.

Embracing boldness, vision, and momentum, DelVal is arching toward greatness.

Our progress comes through clarity of vision, and through the foundation provided by such iconic figures as Dr. Joseph Krauskopf, Dr. James Work and Dr. Joshua Feldstein.

I’m optimistic because:

Our enrollment is solid and growing.

We are on a sounder fiscal footing than ever before with an endowment that has recently doubled.

We’ve restructured the College into four schools, including a graduate school.

We have two new master’s programs in place and five overall and a doctoral program on the way.

And we are well on our way to attaining university status.

As well, we continue to be ranked as one of the best colleges in the Northeast.

On Oct. 11-12 we will hold our second Precarious Alliance symposium.

The first symposium’s theme was food; this time we will focus on the topic of water, a precious and dwindling resource.

Speakers and experts from around the country and the world will be in attendance as they were for the first symposium.

Clearly, we are thriving amid the challenges.

The momentum is holding and we are surging forward.



Still, the process and the complexities of sustaining that momentum stand before us, demanding attention.

This is why we are here tonight at the National Constitution Center, to begin the public phase of this process.

We intend to do something big and we want you all to be part of it!

This center is a fitting place to start.

It is a place of noble beginnings. A block or so from here is Independence Hall, where the idea for a great and powerful nation was conceived.

It was a bold idea. A revolutionary idea. An idea that would ultimately change the fate of every nation on the planet.

Ideas have power, but only in the hands of people willing to do something with them.

While, obviously, on a far different scale, DelVal has assembled a team capable of producing great ideas and, as important, the ability to follow through on them as well.

Faculty, trustees, staff and students joined forces to research, write, develop, refine and implement a strategic plan.

This plan prepared DelVal for the significant obstacles that lay before us.

Becoming a small teaching university, emphasis on small and teaching, gives us the flexibility to not only endure these challenges but prosper.

We will build on the reputation of our agricultural programs and elevate all other departments to the same stature.

Only two short years have passed since the plan was approved, but the transformation of Delaware Valley College has been profound.

Not only are we making more of an impact on higher education, we have taken a college that was little more than a whisper in its own backyard and made it the talk of the town.

Everyone seems to be asking: What's going on at DelVal?

They've heard about the Gemmill/Warwick Foundation \$31 million gift – the gift that endorsed our vision and our strategic plan. We are fortunate to have that donor, Dr. Elizabeth “Betsy” Gemmill, with us here this evening.

Thanks again Betsy!



As well, many in the area know that a Life Sciences Building is being constructed on campus near Route 202, and that it will include a 450-seat auditorium that can be used for community events.

Groundbreaking was in early October. It will be completed in January 2014.

Businesses large and small are now partnering with us to provide students with the internships and real world training that is part of a unique and comprehensive Experiential Learning Program.

We have created the Janet Manion Military and Veterans Center to assist the many active soldiers and returning veterans who are enrolling at Del Val, part of our continuing effort to serve the Northeast and this nation.

The problem is, this is not enough.

All these wonderful assets need further investment.

While our vision is clear, we cannot realize it alone. Help from our alumni and friends is essential.

We need your support for all the things that go into becoming a small teaching university.

We need resources to enhance academic quality and faculty scholarship.

We need new investments to improve our physical plant, especially our athletic and housing facilities.

We need additional support for much needed student scholarships.

As well, we need additional commitments to our annual fund to improve the quality of Student Life and many planned gifts to enhance our endowment.

The details of all of these needs will be explained in our Campaign Case Statement that will be sent to you shortly.

During the silent phase of our campaign, we have seen the commitment and generosity of individuals, foundations and corporations, many of whom are with us tonight.

I thank you for your generosity.

However, achieving the new vibrancy we seek will require the involvement and participation of hundreds more of our alumni and friends.

I often joke that I am not a fundraiser; that my job is to free imprisoned philanthropists.

And we need more philanthropists!!

I sincerely believe that the power of philanthropy is what makes us the greatest country in the world and what will make Del Val a great university as well.



As I ask you to support our Campaign tonight, please don't think of me as a mendicant standing on a street corner begging for money.

Instead I ask you to think of me as I see myself.... A proud educator giving each of you the opportunity to invest in Delaware Valley College's future and more importantly to invest in the future of our students who will make this world a better place.

If I have conveyed anything tonight, I hope it is my love for Delaware Valley College and the faith and trust I place in our board, our alumni, our faculty and staff, our students and our future.

I really love this place!

Del Val has embarked on a journey. I invite you to join us.

It will be a journey you won't soon forget, and one you will never regret.

The realization of our vision is within our grasp.

Our shared vision is bringing energy and passion to Del Val.

I hope when you leave here tonight it remains a part of you, something you take home, think about and decide to invest in.

With your support and involvement our challenges can be overcome and the remarkable can be achieved.

The most important element to the success of this campaign is the enthusiasm and love you have for this, our College.

That's our "not so secret" weapon!

The Scottish writer Henry Drummond said,

*"You will find as you look back upon your life that the moments when you have truly lived are the moments when you have done things in the spirit of love."*

This is what I ask of you tonight. I ask that you exercise the spirit of love.

Ahead lies greatness.

Please join us on our journey.





## No Exchange

One has left  
One remains  
Similar yet different  
Shells on a shore,  
Leaves on a tree.

Both joyful  
Curious  
Exuberant  
Full of life,  
Making me feel wistful.

Not interchangeable  
One is missed  
One is ever-present  
But nonetheless,  
I love and mourn for both.

Barbara Murphy Grimes

Mikaela Cole

## Survivor

At first glance,  
The lily-of-the-valley seems  
An unlikely candidate  
To represent strength.  
Sweet, delicate, bowed in modesty,  
It stands in dainty refinement,  
Bearing a fair and gentle blossom  
of white.

At times, a creature may  
Wantonly attack it,  
Lacerating its tender tissues  
On a misguided quest.  
Though injured, this diminutive  
flower  
Will not uproot itself and flee  
And yet endures.

Ecologically, the lily is quite old  
And has witnessed a vast amount  
of conflict,  
Yet still it withstands attack and  
insult.

The creature that harmed it  
Will eventually perish,  
But the lily-of-the-valley lives on  
And shall return each year in  
triumph.

Delightful bright spirit,  
Harbinger of happiness  
And blessed resolve.  
Behold the lily-of-the-valley  
In all its gentle and modest grace:  
Pure and perfect  
Zen.

—Professor Karen Schramm





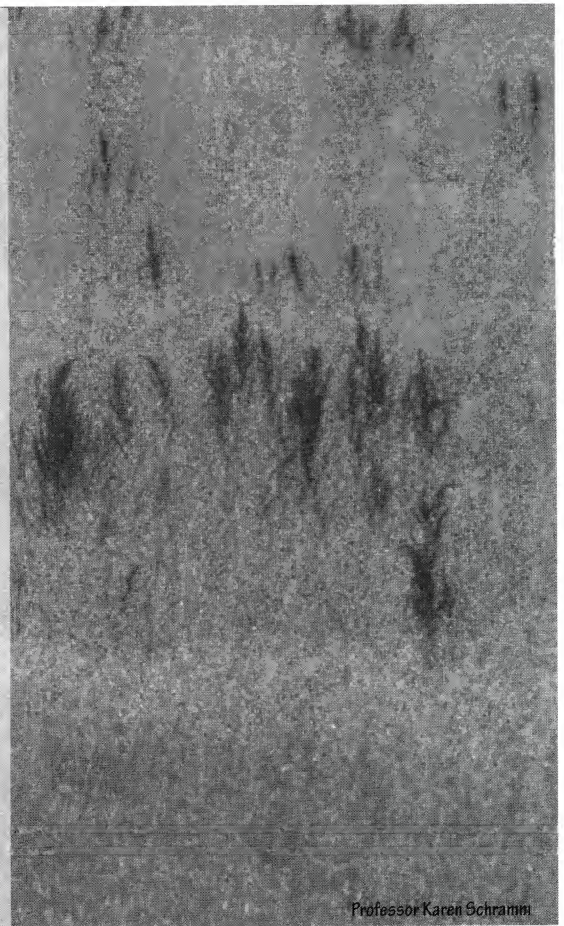
## Cash Crop?

*Grass grows in Montana:  
Hay-crops, acre after acre, endless fields of monoculture.  
Grass grows on acreage, grass and little else.  
The hay stands in hues of green paling into gold.  
Green and gold, like cash and bullion,  
The color of money.*

*Grass grows in Montana:  
Prairie shortgrass, vast and shining expanses of diversity,  
Grass grows on wild lands, grass and a thriving organic community:  
Birds and bison, prairie dogs and antelope.  
The prairie grass shines in hues of burnished copper,  
Copper coin,  
The color of money.*

*Green and gold  
Or radiant copper?  
I'll take the latter,  
True prairie wealth.*

—Professor Karen Schramm



Professor Karen Schramm



Professor Karen Schramm



Professor Karen Schramm

## DelValues?

**I** am not an extrovert.

**N**ot that there's anything wrong with that.

**T**eaching, though, I come alive! And body-surfing,

**R**oller-coaster-riding, dancing, hiking, sailing, enjoying  
fine music,

**O**ptimizing students' success, baking delicious treats,  
eco-camping with my buddies:

**V**arious and wonderful are my activities and interests.

Friends say I am

**E**nergetic, caring, creative, honest, supportive, brilliant.

But I've no use for small-talk, gossip, or slander,

So to you I just seem

Freakishly

Quiet.

**R**ather than criticizing me for not being you,

**T**ry accepting me as I am: tolerance of diversity  
should be a Core Value of this College.

—Professor Karen Schramm



# Pieces

Joann Donigan

My life has been put together piece by piece-  
Moment by moment-  
Person by person.  
I was born.

Two wonderful parents became the first pieces in the puzzle of my life. And on the day of my birth my parents handed another very important frame piece to me, my god-mother.

Several years later, when I turned five, in fact on the very day, I was blessed once again; my wonderful sister fell into place, another piece of who I am.

There were many pieces that fell into place when I was growing up. Years later the three pieces of my own family came together, fitting perfectly! The pieces were all in place: Mom, Dad, Sister, Husband, Daughter, Son, Friend. A picture was starting to take shape, a beautiful puzzle, my life. A true gift!

However, it was not too long ago that I discovered a piece was missing, a very important piece, the one in the upper left corner, the one that helped to frame the border of my life. The one that kept the puzzle's frame together.

My wonderful father was the first missing piece.

Now, don't get me wrong. The picture was still visible, still beautiful—but still missing that one very important piece. It took a long time, but eventually I came to terms with the fact that my puzzle was incomplete, and I kept on building.

Then, just a few short days ago, on my birthday, I discovered that the piece that held the upper right hand corner together was lost, the piece that completed the beautiful bunch of blue violets in the corner..... My dearest Mother

Now there are two missing pieces- The puzzle is still beautiful, but still incomplete. Sometimes I go through the day feeling lost, empty.....

I am still looking for my missing pieces- While still trying to be "the best me there is" without them.

YOU TAUGHT ME THAT MOM.

You told me and showed me countless times:

"I am me, I always will be a second best somebody else. But I am the best ME there is".  
My puzzle is the best it can be, without my missing pieces- beautiful yet incomplete.  
I still look for them- every single day,  
Especially the one with the beautiful blue.... eyes!



## WHOEVER SAID JUNE, JULY, AND AUGUST ARE THREE GOOD REASONS FOR TEACHING?

*"You're not making \$10,000.00 a year yet are you?" asked my mom on one of my many trips back to Oregon. "Mom, I'm making more than that as a college professor," and I told her the salary figure. It was then over \$20,000. Compared with her \$4,500-\$5,000 maximum as an elementary school teacher in the 1950's and 60's mine seemed like a king's ransom!*

*Why did I choose to become a teacher? Probably because our mother was a teacher, not only of four boys and of the Junior Boys class in Sunday School, but also an elementary school teacher at different schools in Nebraska and Oregon. Furthermore, Mom's brother and his wife were also elementary school teachers in rural Idaho. It was my uncle who encouraged me to build a model car for Fisher Body Craftsmen's Guild and send it to Detroit, Michigan, where it won honorable mention for Oregon. These were my early mentors. Later mentors were my first grade teacher, the eighth grade teacher, who eventually lived to be over 100, and my high school English/French teacher. These were sources of inspiration to me. It was the latter who encouraged me enough in French to win the Prix d'Honneur award. They were always professionally groomed, used excellent grammar, knew each of us students by first and last names, and even allowed room mothers to bring in special treats for us from time to time. And their standards for excellence were high and gained our respect.*

*Years later, one favorite graduate professor stands out for his teaching technique. He used to tell me, "Ziemer, you never write a good first draft but you always benefit by re-writing." The discipline benefited many ways.*

*I used to think that I'd be at Delaware Valley College for three to five years because when my wife and I first married we lived in Doylestown and New Britain during our honeymoon years. Glancing back now at forty-seven years at Delaware Valley College I can verify Job's utterance, "Our years pass by swifter than a weaver's shuttle" or St. James's, "Our life is a vapor." I have my wife to thank for being here 47 years because it was she who suggested that I interview at "the little college over the hill from Doylestown." That was after sending out 145 resumes and job application letters to various colleges and universities in the U.S. and Canada.*

*Dr. Arthur Brown, whom I replaced in teaching Philosophy and Sociology at DVC, sat next to me on a bench in front of Allman Building on the day of my interview, May 1966. When I questioned him about how effective I'd be teaching at an agricultural college, he replied, "You'll do just fine." Dr. Glick echoed similarly that because I came from an agricultural background*

*the administration figured that I'd be a good match for the students. He also encouraged me to begin teaching in summer school to acclimate myself to the College.*

*That "breaking in" and setting up a schedule for fall worked well. Another issue was meeting Dr. Work to negotiate my salary. I had asked for \$8,000.00 but settled on \$7,000.00 for 1966-67, with the promise that if I did a good job, I'd get a \$500 raise the next year. When June came, the dean called me into his office to have me sign the contract for the following year. I gazed in dismay at the \$250.00 raise and told him so. He said there was nothing he could do about it but that I was welcome to speak with Dr. Work. When I confronted Dr. Work with my diary in which I had written \$500 for doing a good job, he replied, "Did I say that?" "Yes, that's what I wrote; did I do a good job?" Affirmative reply, and he signed it.*

*It is said we remember the very good and the very bad students. I can't say which it is for me, but teaching has given me decades of experience that my mother must have enjoyed. Upon visiting classmates, relatives, or friends in Oregon, I usually meet someone who says, "Your mother was my 3rd or 4th grade teacher way back when." Her legacy lives on in their memories, and her mentorship validates why I chose teaching.*

*The traditional "apple for the teacher" has netted me cabbage, cauliflower, potatoes, duck eggs, fresh horse radish, mushrooms, produce, pies, venison, maple syrup, scores of cards at Christmas, Valentine's Day, birthdays, and yes, even Father's Day greetings.*

*During the intervening years of my own years in the classroom I've been the recipient of so much kindness that I feel I owe everybody I know—that John Donne or Milton was right in saying, "I'm a part of all I've met."*

*Dr. Richard C. Ziemer, Professor of Liberal Arts*



Ashley Shiffer





Professor Karen Schramm

## *Tear Drops*

*Becca DiFabio*

*Tear drops.  
Rain drops.  
Falling  
Dripping  
Tear drops.*

*She shudders  
She sighs  
She closes her eyes.  
Wishes the pain would terminate  
Wishes she could forget  
Wishes the world could pause  
And she sits with her  
Tear drops.*

*Droplets pelt to the pavement  
Lightning strikes*

*The sky booms  
And  
Tear drops fall to the shiny tile floor.  
But the storm will soon pass  
As will the pain.  
It can't last forever because the  
Sun craves to show her glistening rays.  
The dark clouds will soon expose the  
bright blue sky.  
She will soon open her eyes,  
Step outside  
And know that the storm has passed  
Because the sun craves to show her  
glistening rays  
And Mother Nature knows the  
Day will be free of any more  
Tear drops.*



*Apologies*  
By Mikaela Cole

*The Damager, done,  
Set to damage undoing,  
The words that burned,  
Sent to cauterize the wound.*

*But will they touch?  
Will they be heard?*

*Or will the Wounded, remembering,  
Seared and scalded,  
Pained and cautious,  
Flee, hearing the thund'rous roar  
Of my stampeding sorrow.*

*Remembrance*  
By Mikaela Cole

*A thousand years of memories,  
A thousand years of regret.  
A thousand years for the ink to  
fade,  
A thousand years to forget.  
A thousand years to know of your  
death,  
And a thousand years to repent;  
A thousand years to recall your  
voice,  
And those moments most happily  
spent.*

*The "Me" in Me*  
By Mikaela Çole

*I am myself*

*The coward in me fears limitations  
And drags my goals downwards  
From stars to streetlamps*

*The crybaby in me fears pain  
Betrayal, loss, incompetence  
And shortens my stride  
As I approach happiness*

*The confidence in me fears trust  
Faltering and vulnerable  
Scrambling at open air  
For a hand that may not pull me up;  
An earth that may not hold my weight*

*But I take another step  
Because I am myself  
And I am not quitting*

*NEVER DEAD AND NEVER GONE*  
BY MIKAELA COLE

*NOW THAT WE HAVE COME TO TRUTH,  
WE WILL DISPENSE WITH THE HIDDEN MEANINGS  
AND WITH THE FORGOTTEN WORDS OF OUR LIES.*

*OUR 'LONG AGOS' AND 'SOMEDAY SOONS'  
LIE VULNERABLE IN AN OPEN GRAVE;  
I SORT THROUGH THEM WITH A BATTERED SHIELD  
AND A SHIVERED SPEAR.*

*I ONCE IMAGINED FREEDOM.  
A TIME WHEN INFATUATION WOULD PASS  
AND THE SHACKLES WOULD BE  
CAST ASIDE IN A FLURRY OF EMOTION.*

*NOW THEY LIE ABANDONED AND THE BONDS  
FEEL STRONGER YET; STILL THE WORDS  
REMAIN ENTRENCHED, A REMEMBERED LIFE  
TO WHICH I CLING.*



*My Dear Dreamer*  
*By Heather Vorwerk*

*My dear dreamer, never forget  
That I am here, I haven't left you yet  
When you're asleep I wait to see  
Your lively eyes staring up at me  
It's hard to believe, that it has been so long  
The love for you is still not gone  
I still wait for you to feel  
The touch that you once held so dear  
Is all lost in time?  
Don't you hear the bells chime?  
The deeper ones have gone to rest  
The heavenly ones have begun their jest!  
Are you still in denial?  
Is that heart of yours refusing the truth?  
I am gone from you  
You from me too  
It hurts, I know  
Because we have all once been human, so  
My dear dreamer, no longer weep  
I am too far away to catch you in your sleep*

*Golden Gates*  
*By Nyeisha Harper*

*A peaceful sleep  
Waking up in an empty hall way with two doors  
Go into one there is complete darkness  
Leave the room and find a door with glowing lights  
Open the door and you're blinded by the brightness  
There he stands smiling down at you  
A door appears and he walks in never to return  
Tears begin to stain your eyes  
His final words  
"Good-bye friend"*

*Your Hero*  
*By: Elena Marchewka*

*I can be your hero  
Your knight in shining armor  
Your anything and everything  
Your protector  
To keep you safe from harm  
Keeping you safe in my arms  
I'd do anything for you because you're my hero too.*



# Derby Dreams

## Olivia Banta



Ashley Shiffer

*"Jockeys up!"*

Amelia heard the booming voice and looked at the horse before her. The big chestnut stallion, Comandeer, was being held by his groom as they stood in the path. They started to slowly move and she grabbed onto his saddle and put her foot in the stirrup. His trainer, Walter Smythe, gave her a leg up and she sat on his back proudly. Being on his back was like being on top of the world. He pranced as they walked the path leading to the big Churchill Downs oval.

They had been working towards this race since the colt was younger. She had gotten the mount on Comandeer since he started racing and they had never been separated. She held tightly onto the whip in her hand and sighed. Finally, they came to the track and one of the lead ponies grabbed onto Comandeer's bridle.

She looked at the wide track before her the twin spires looming over them. In the field of nineteen they were sixth in line. It was a good post especially for Comandeer. The announcer went through each horse and finally reached them.

"In post six, we have Comandeer being ridden by Amelia Jones. He has five wins in eight starts. Doing no worse than second place, he has three stakes wins and three placings in stakes. Amelia is trying to become the first female to win the Derby."

She was hoping to do just that.

"The last female jockey to run the Derby was Rosemary Homeister in 2003 aboard Supah Blitz. That day they finished 13th," the announcer finished.

That fact scared her. A win in this race would change her life forever. Being the daughter of two jockeys, her dad having won this race, had put a lot of pressure on her. Enthralled, she had always watched her parents ride their races. For years she wished she had the respect her parents had but in this industry it was hard. This was her chance though. Winning this race would mean more opportunities and bigger races for her. They neared the starting gate and her heart started its own race.

"Good luck," the rider said as he let her go and she jogged Comandeer the rest of the way. She walked him around, waiting for the other horses to load before they would.

She patted his neck as they were led to the gate. He was coaxed into line without a problem. He stood calmly, ears pricked, and looking straight ahead. The roar of the crowd was starting to fade as she grabbed some of his mane in her hands. She lowered herself a little over his neck. The man sitting on the separator of the gate smiled at her and grabbed his bridle.

The ring of the starting bell. The echo of people cheering. The snapping of the gates as they opened rang in her ears as the long expanse of track appeared before her and they flew from the gate.



## Death of a Prairie Vole

Rachel Gentzler

Sweetly, softly, yearning  
Eyes set seeking the heat  
Through grasses ever turning.

Blind eyes, thoughts only concerning  
The search for food among the wheat.

Sweetly, softly, yearning

The vole will soon be learning  
Of the serpent's desire, lust to eat,  
Within the grasses ever turning.

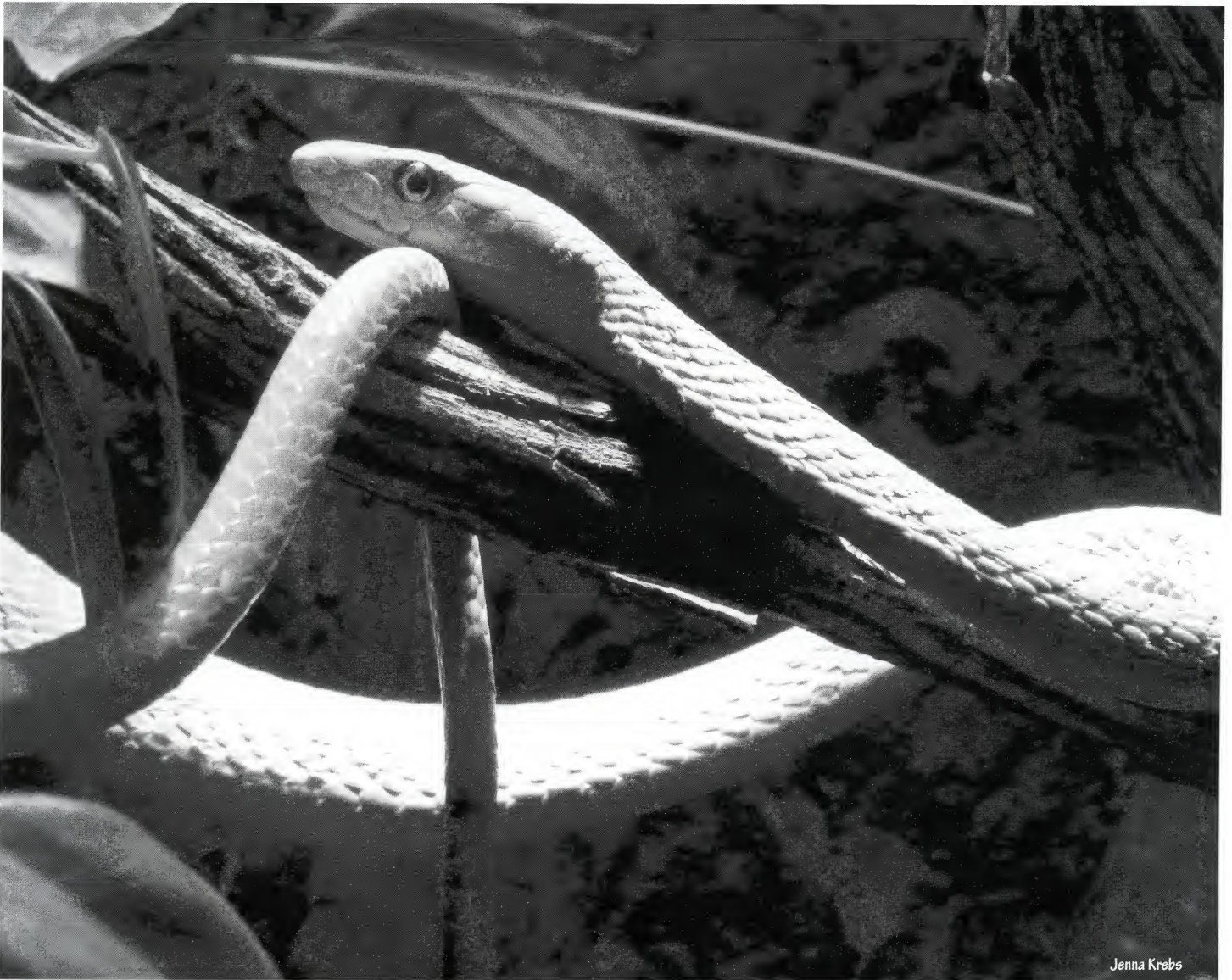
Swift strike starts the burning,  
Poison flows. Pierce the heart, stop the beat.

Sweetly. Softly. Yearning

For the freedom, but never earning.  
Soft flesh devoured, the deed complete  
In the grasses ever turning.

Hunger will soon be returning,  
The dark task again to repeat.

Sweetly softly yearning,  
Through the grasses ever turning.



Jenna Krebs





## Pancakes in the Morning

*Becca DiFabbio*

A ripping pain jolted from his left ankle to his head. He continued on. He swam through the branches, leaves, cheeping insects singing to the moon and rocks hoping to catch him as he soars onto the rubble beneath him. A faint cry of a wolf is heard bellowing to the starry sky from among the old hovering trees. He stopped and glanced down at his trembling body and the moon provided him with just enough light to notice blood streaking down from his ankle, soaking the rim of his sock. His head pounded like a bass drum keeping the beat to an allegro musical piece. His dry mouth thirsted for hydration; the humid, dry weather left him craving water. His hollow stomach ached for food. His body had never had to endure such stress, mentally and physically. The night left him feeling nothing but loneliness and hunger.



The morning greeted him with a helpless hope but he knew he must continue on. After wandering around in what seemed like circles, he felt the last of his strength and energy drain from his weak body. He threw his dirt-stained backpack on the ground a few feet away in frustration. He sat down on an old log in the path and rested his head in his hands. The woods felt so peaceful. The wind sent a light breeze through the air. A squirrel strolled along in front of his feet with an acorn in its mouth. A butterfly fluttered over to his knee and landed. She sat there for a minute and he stared, envious of the seemingly careless life of a butterfly. The sun's rays made their way through the trees and the butterfly's delicate wings glistened in the light. The dainty patterns of deep blue and black speckles glowed as the sun gazed down on her. He couldn't believe the beauty in his presence at that moment when his life was in such dismay. The butterfly took flight and headed down between the trees and out of sight.

He decided it was time again to continue on. He put his backpack on and walked down the path the butterfly decided to take, limping from his left ankle growing increasingly sore. His shoes crunched through the leaves and pushed on. He thought about his five-year-old daughter and how he couldn't wait to hold her close to him, lifting her into the air and staring into her smiling eyes. He was growing impatient and craved to be in his wife's arms once again.

He walked through the woods for about another mile and decided to stop again. His body was becoming weaker and he didn't want to push himself too hard. He rested against a tree trunk and sat his backpack next to him. Hunger was enveloping him. His mind couldn't think straight. He looked up to the tree tops and everything became dizzy. His eyes went blurry. He closed his eyes and that only made his head pound more than it already was. He decided to search through his backpack once more for any ounce of food or water. He moved his hands through the various items: pens, his wallet, receipts, and an empty water bottle. There was nothing to be found. He sat in disbelief, just waiting for something to happen, anything to happen.

As he sat in his silence, he thought he heard a small stream trickling nearby. His ears led him around an old brick wall, a large leafy bush and down a small hill.

Water. Maybe there is hope.

Instantly, his mind forgot about his sore legs, bruised arms, torn shirt and bleeding ankle. His eyes focused on the running water and he made his way closer and closer to one of the most natural necessities nature can provide for us. His hands plunged into the stream and a chill ran through his veins. The ice cold water stung the cuts on his hands but that didn't matter. None of that mattered; survival just became an option, a possibility...mandatory.

He cupped his hands and filled his mouth with icy water, feeling the sensation of it slipping down his throat. He splashed some onto his face, smiling for the first time in five days with a renewed hope that everything will be okay. He laced his fingers through his hair with wet hands, attempting to remove the dirt and leaves since the first day's journey. His head stung as the fresh, cold water met his scalp, dripping down his cheeks and creating a puddle on his shoulder. He tore off his shoes, exposing his throbbing, exhausted feet to the world. He dipped them into the water and paused, wiggling his toes, reviving them back to life. His left ankle thanked him as the blood washed away and the swelling went down.

For a moment, the woods went silent. No birds chattering, no crickets chirping, no wind blowing. His body went numb. His ears popped and his hands began tingling. The excitement sent his head spinning, the world flipping upside down. His heart rate increased, his breathing became faster, heavier, taking in breaths as though his lungs no longer wished for air. His chest tightened, he felt a muscle spasm in his leg and cramping in his side.



“Good morning, hun,” his wife’s voice whispered to him.

His body jolted with excitement and he opened his eyes. He felt the soft mattress underneath him and the familiar fuzzy sheets wrapped around his shivering body. He felt a warmth approach him and he turned his head to see his wife sliding closer. The corners of her mouth formed a smile and she moved her hand to rest on his chest.

“You’re shaking, what’s wrong?” her voice grew with a concerning tone.

He rolled over to face his wife and slipped his hand around her waist, grunting as his joints ached from the last night’s sleep. He placed his hand on her shoulder, massaging the back of her neck and moving the light wisps of hair from her face. The light blush of her cheeks reminded him of her natural beauty that he’s admired for so many years. He could feel her breaths puffing against his bare chest; his chills subsided.

“Just a bad dream, that’s all. Good morning,” he pushed out through his tired diaphragm. It was complete bliss to be where he was right now. Nothing could spoil this moment.

Soon after, the couple decided to get up and start their day. He made his way to the kitchen, still groggy and craving a hot cup of freshly brewed coffee. As he scooped crushed coffee beans into the coffee maker and filled it with water, his wife entered into the kitchen and flipped on the television. She kept the volume low as to not wake up their daughter and turned to the morning news.

Under the mumbling of the coffee maker brewing, he heard the news reporter informing them on the latest news.

“Today we received a report on a hiker who had been missing for the past five days in who was just found at 7:00 a.m. this morning. He has been reunited with his family and is now recovering in the hospital. He does not have any life-threatening conditions; however, the doctors are working on a serious infection that formed on his left ankle that is spreading to his foot. We will provide an update on his recovery tomorrow and we wish the best of luck to him. Until then, this is Sarah Woods, reporting. Back to you, Bill.”

He laughed out loud and cut himself off, realizing how loud he was.

“What’s up with you?” his wife asked.

He walked over to his wife and put his arms around her. He kissed the top of her head.

“Oh, nothing. I’m just a little tired is all. So what’s for breakfast?”

“PANCAKES!” a tiny voice screeched from down the hall. His daughter ran around the corner and joined them in their hug, her small arms attempting to fit around both of them.

“Pancakes sounds fine to me!” he exclaimed.

The coffee pot beeped. He turned off the television and poured his cup of coffee. He then made his way to the cabinet for the pancake mix. All of a sudden his left ankle gave out and he nearly fell to the tiled kitchen floor. He caught himself on the counter and stood up straight.

“I can’t imagine why that would have just happened,” he muttered to himself.



# "Daydreamer"

Josh Hall

We are all just a generation of lost souls;  
The lucky few know their path.  
They have the drive, the passion, the yearning;  
And the means to go far.

But what about the rest of us?  
The "daydreamers," the "slackers,"  
the "unmotivated,"  
The children who were not meant to be left behind:  
Where do we fit in?

They say the system is not perfect.  
That we are all stars, thus equal.  
We go to class and they "teach" us.  
We take the test and they "help" us.  
We struggle and they "medicate" us.

And then somehow...  
"Look at you!"  
"Your hard work paid off!"  
"Happy Graduation!"

Now we, the lost souls, are told to move on.  
To go to college,  
To make something of ourselves,  
To settle down and follow our path to success.

But how are we to follow a path when we  
Do not know what path to take?  
What our path looks like, or  
Where our path even starts?

The "others" worry about,  
The surface of their life:  
Their grades and GPA,  
Who is with whom.

We worry about the depth of our life,  
Who we are and want to become,  
Who we should become,  
What we want to do when we grow up ...

If we grow up.  
This is the cause of  
Our restlessness,  
Our uneasiness.

But wait, just wait.  
One day all will be clear to us and  
We will find our path and  
We will live our lives.

Whether we are  
Healers of the sick,  
Enforcers of the law,  
Giants of the Street, or

Beach bums on tropical islands,  
We will be the ones who  
Help those that need it the most,  
US!



### Untitled—Kristin Kenney

May the children of the world be safe today -  
To run, to grow, to laugh, to play.  
May the families who love them  
Cherish each day.  
May the children of the world be safe today.  
With grief and love our hearts will pray  
For all whose little ones were taken away.  
May angels watch where the children play  
That all of God's children may be safe today.

### A LOVEABLE BUNCH—KRISTIN KENNEY

AS MORNING SUN TRICKLES THROUGH THE WINDOW,  
THE SCURRY OF SCAMPERING PAWS CONFIRMS THE DAY.  
A SOFT, GRAY TABBY CLIMBS UP TO MY HEAD,  
HE MEOWS, LET'S EAT! AND THEN JUMPS OFF THE BED.  
HE GIVES OUR MIDNIGHT GIRL A CURIOUS GLANCE.  
SHE SWATS HIS NOSE AND DARTS OFF WITH A POUNCE.  
THERE'S A FELINE STAND-OFF, AND BOTH ARE READY FOR TROUBLE,  
THEN KIBBLE, COFFEE, BOOKS, A PURR OR TWO...  
THE CURLY-TAILED SHIBA JOINS THE ENTERTAINMENT,  
WAX ON, WAX OFF - HER PAWS ACROSS THE DOOR.  
ALRIGHT, ALRIGHT, MY HOPPING KARATE PUPPY,  
GO WAKE THE LEAVES AND TWIGS AND BIRDS AND SQUIRRELS.  
CRAZY, CRASHING, JUMPING, TALKING, DANCING;  
WHAT ELSE COULD BRING SUCH SMILES INTO MY WORLD?

### Family—Kristin Kenney

There is something about having my family always being there to count on.  
They encourage me and support me in my efforts; even if it means working up an interest when something I embrace is not their cup of tea.  
They help me realize my strengths and my abilities even when I fear or doubt myself.  
We've built such enduring memories, that I have family at my side,  
even when we're miles apart.  
We reconnect on weekends, and summer travels to road trip sites.  
A panorama of natural wonders has inspired our minds and hearts.  
I tell myself, enjoy these memories – life changes for us all so fast.  
Their threads are woven through my life in the tapestry of our past.



At first, it was normal  
like the sky was smoking a cigarette  
and we were caught in the halo of its exhale  
At first,  
they just looked like really big snow flakes  
falling fast  
sticking to the cement paved parking garage  
covering the rocks we skipped at recess  
and the chalk marks made for hop-scotch  
At first,  
it felt like we were at a barbeque  
it got hot  
like it gets when you stand too close to the grill  
At first, we didn't know what was going on  
just that it was fourth period  
after lunch  
we were standing in front of the windows that  
covered the walls  
the ones we use to watch the river at  
the ones with the perfect view of the bridge  
my aunt walked on her lunch break

Ashley Palkowetz

All of a sudden it wasn't so normal anymore  
This wasn't just another day after recess  
the adults held their faces like prunes  
their eyes watery  
lips trembling  
something wasn't right  
something in the window was missing  
the buildings  
where my stepdad worked  
and my best friend's dad worked  
and Keanu's mom walked by  
suddenly  
snow wasn't funny  
or cute to play in  
barbeque scent was the furthest thing from  
our minds  
and we all silently promised to never blow  
smoke the way planes hitting buildings do  
promised if everyone we knew made it home  
tonight we'd eat all our string beans without  
one complaint  
we were children

who watched the world collapse from our  
school window  
who had no teacher to explain how anything  
could add up to murder  
in the end  
it was just  
a traumatizing day  
bonding us together with fear  
confusion  
sorrow  
and love  
for all the things and people we didn't know  
how to save

By safiya washington



Shannon Parker



# Mirror Mirror

By Stacey Cornwell

*I sat against your bedroom wall  
A dusty drape half hid my shine  
You had no need for me back then  
An ancient heirloom pushed away*

*But even through the dust and drape  
I still beheld her peerless grace  
Fairer than all those before her  
Sweet Snow White put all to shame*

*Only then, did you come to me  
Mirror mirror upon the wall  
You asked, determined and dismayed  
Who is the fairest of them all?*

*Your question met with not a sound  
My silence drove your anger on  
You put her fate in poison's wrath  
An apple gifted from a crone*

*But all plans failed and back you came  
Your shoulders slumped, your hair a mess  
Your beauty gone beyond repair  
And still my words I kept at bay*

*I am a mirror after all  
We don't say much, or naught at all  
Nor can we measure beauty's worth  
We just reflect that which we see*



Ashley Smith



## Silence

By: Chris Hood

*When the silence is all you know  
it becomes who you are  
as it becomes difficult to show  
what is hidden beneath your scars.*

*If some things are better off unsaid,  
why isn't the world more quiet?  
Where would this world be led  
if life were that much more silent?*

*They say that silence is golden,  
yet things have yet to change;  
it seems as if my voice is stolen  
when situations become strange.*

*In a room of people all around,  
and lonely is all you can feel,  
your fears are all that seems to be found  
as the silence of being alone becomes real.*

*When all you know is being lonely,  
the silence becomes your closest friend.  
As there is no one around to see  
what fears you try to fend.*

*The silence can bring a peace of mind  
when the world overwhelms your life,  
and yet all you want to find  
is someone to break that lonely strife.*

*There is a difference between loneliness and solitude,  
for loneliness brings the fear of that silence,  
and a fear of being alone for good,  
yet solitude prevents the silence from making life tense.*

*The views of silence may never be similar  
and it may only be in the eyes of the beholder;  
but in a world where the biggest battle is an inner war  
the silence can make life that much colder.*



Ashley Palkowetz

## The Storm

By: Chris Hood

*A storm rolls through the darkening sky.  
Beginning to build its strength,  
and planning to leave not a single passerby,  
as it travels its full length.*

*Trapped in a state of darkness  
with no light to provide guidance,  
as we attempt to mask the sadness  
and forget what is causing the distance.*

*A strong cold wind, not hard to find,  
blows through this deserted place;  
with heavy rain that helps to remind  
of all that is put to waste.*

*There is a single, broken tree  
that stands in a forest of many;  
but as far as the eye can see,  
it stands just as lonely.*

*The sky overhead shows little promise  
as the clouds become stained a cold gray;  
the impending storm proves to be relentless  
and shows it is here to stay.*

*There appears to be no presence of change  
besides that of the wind and rain,  
with feelings that are nothing but strange  
as they are filled with just pain.*

*But every dark tunnel has its ultimate end  
where there is a glimmer of light  
even when it seems you don't have that friend  
to help give that storm a fight.*



Justin Becker



## *People in Our Lives*

*By: Chris Hood*

*People come into your life, they come and they go;  
Friends, family, even strangers, and they all leave a mark.*

*We all have a history, a background that helps define us,  
We have met people in our past that have helped make us who we are,  
People, without whom our lives would be so different.*

*We have had those impacts on others as well,  
We rely on these friendships to be there when we need them.  
Every day you meet someone new your life could change instantly,  
That person could be your new best friend, or your worst enemy,  
They could be your future spouse, or just a future part of your past.*

*We want to know about everyone's past,  
For we can know so much about a person about the paths they've traveled,  
Paths that we can relate to, or learn from.*

*We hold these people close because we don't want to lose them,  
the future is never set in stone, it is never definite.  
All that is certain is the present, and who makes your life worth living.  
These friendships may be temporary, or permanent if we are lucky,  
But they are still just as important.*

*We don't want to ruin what we love, or lose who we care about;  
We, as humans, become accustomed to these bonds,  
And for most of us, they mean the world.  
People come into your life, they come and they go;  
But it is how you choose to keep them and those memories that shape our lives.*



A Wondrous Land  
By Stacey Cornwell

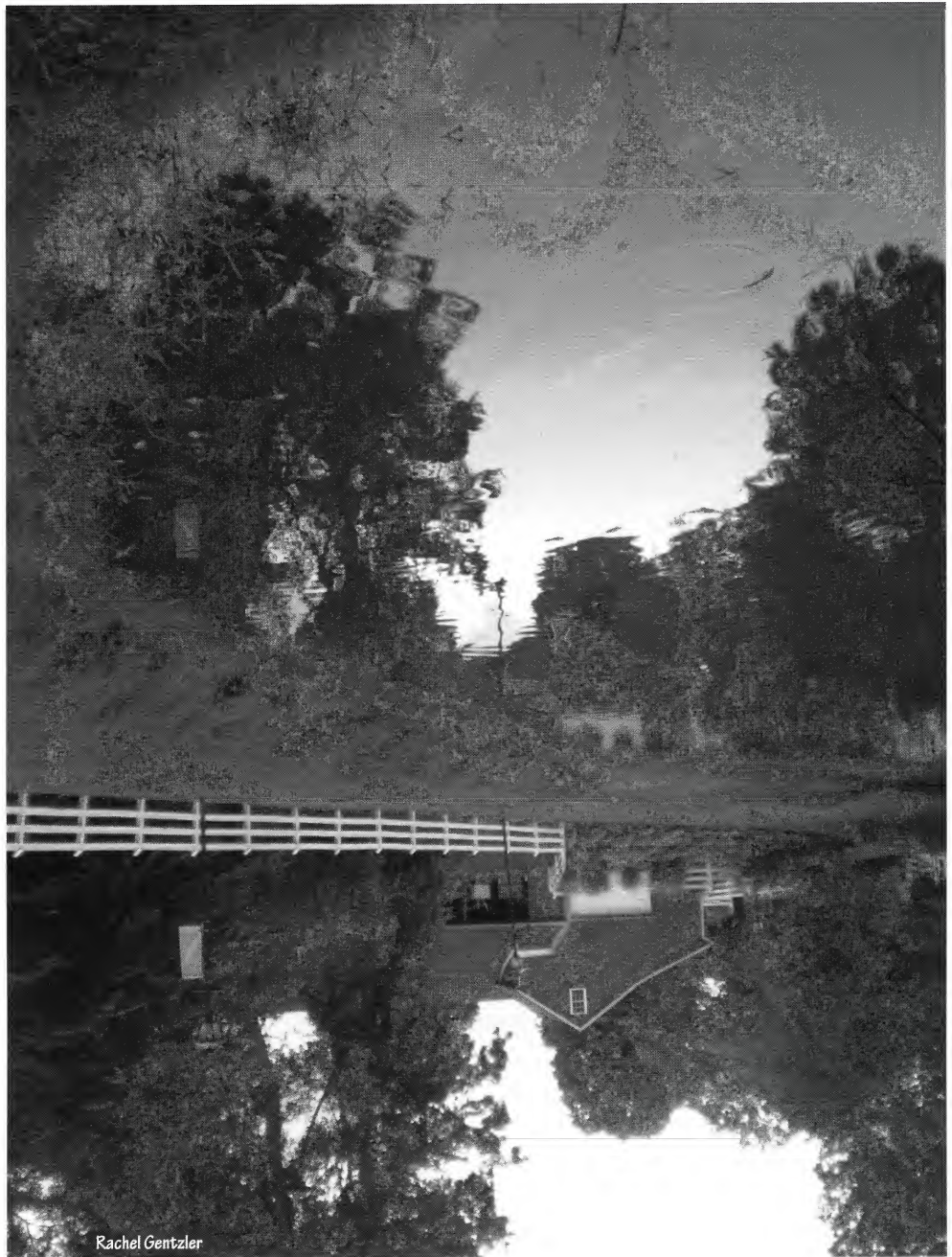
"Alice! Alice!" Lewis called, annoyed when no answer came. She had done it to him again. During the day little children would stumble through the Hall of Mirrors, lost and confused, laughing as they walked into their own reflections; but at night it was usually empty as the older children who were still out preferred the scarier rides like roller coasters and death defying drops.

All Alice had to do was turn her coy smile in his direction and he would follow her anywhere. Usually he followed her into the Hall of Mirrors, where she would rush through the memorized maze and be out the other end before he knew it, leaving Lewis to stumble into his own reflection as he tried to find his way out.

Lewis was once again stumbling through the maze, swearing he was going to find a schematic for this thing and memorize it, when the lights went out. Lewis froze and tried to

listen for any sounds that would give away what had happened. Blinking to adjust his eyes to the darkness, Lewis looked about at the ghostly forms his reflection made in the eerie emergency lights that showed down in the sudden darkness. Trying to go through the maze with the lights on was hard enough; in the dark it was impossible. "This isn't funny, Alice!" Lewis yelled. "Turn the lights back on!"

There was no answer and Lewis began to think that something really wrong had happened. Putting both hands up to the mirror in front of him, he tried to remember which direction he had been walking toward and moved his hands along the mirrors, trying to feel his way along the walls of the maze. His reflection kept coming back to him in that sickly yellow light as more





frightened than he felt and Lewis was reminded of many of the horror movies he had watched throughout the years. This was just Alice playing a joke on him, he told himself over and over again, nothing serious that he really needed to worry about. When he finally found his way to the exit she would be there smiling and laughing at how scared he'd gotten. If only he could find his way there everything would be alright.

Light suddenly bloomed behind him and Lewis turned, expecting to find Alice there with a flash light grinning and telling him to follow her. But when he turned around the light was not coming from any flash light, but from one of the mirrors instead; the edges glowed a bright white and he could clearly see his shocked face reflected back at him.

Then the surface of the mirror shimmered, disrupting his image, and another began to form. One with large mushrooms and flowers whose blooms opened higher than he was tall. Thinking maybe it was some kind of a projection on the mirror, he squinted at the scene, trying to find faults within the image. Lewis still couldn't believe it was real as he watched someone running toward him from within the mirror.

As she grew closer and closer he realized it was a young girl, and that that girl had the same shining blonde hair as Alice. He took another step closer to the mirror; it was Alice. Now he was convinced that she was playing some kind of prank on him.

Smiling, he turned around to try and find the projection machine where the image was coming from. The scene playing out on the mirror was reflected all around him; the image getting smaller and smaller as it reflected back on itself repeatedly, but he could not see where the image could be projected from.

"Alice," he called out. "You can stop with the joke, it's not fooling me."

"Lewis," he heard her call. But instead of her voice coming from somewhere in the maze or from the speakers, he heard it coming from the mirror. Turning back again he could see that she had gotten quite large in the mirror, as if she were getting closer to him, but that was impossible, wasn't it.

Walking forward again, he reached out a hand to touch the mirror. His fingers slipped through where he was sure the barrier of the mirror should have stopped them and he was able to see them on the other side of the mirror. He reached out and touched one of the flower stems and he could actually feel the soft, slippery texture of it. The flower shifted then and turned down to him and Lewis could see a face within the petals of the flower. Retracting his hand quickly, he brought it back to his side of the mirror.

"Lewis," Alice called again and Lewis looked to Alice. Behind her he could see figures running after her, chasing her actually. Directly behind her was a man with crazy orange hair and a ridiculously flamboyant top hat. Next to this man hopped a white rabbit, which was somehow able to keep up with both Alice and the crazy man with the top hat. And behind all three of them were what looked like large playing cards holding knives and swords that they brandished before them as they tried to catch the three they chased.

"Off with their heads!" echoed out from the mirror, though Lewis could not see who had shouted those words. Backing up against the mirrored wall, Lewis braced for he knew not what. He knew it was not possible for them to come running out of the mirror, but the closer they got the more it seemed plausible.

The flowers bent out of their way as Alice ran closer to him, and turned to watch her as she passed, their flower faces twisted in anger. The mushrooms hopped to the side of the path or off into the tall grass to avoid being trampled by the advancing army.



Lewis knew he should probably turn around and run, but he couldn't. It could have been because some part of his brain still couldn't perceive what was happening as real and therefore there was no reason to run from something that couldn't hurt him, or it could have been that he was so shocked by what he was seeing that he couldn't move even if he had wanted to. Whatever the reason, his feet were rooted to the floor when Alice's hand passed through the mirror, back to Lewis' side of it, and the rest of her body followed soon after. Alice ran frantically past him, her eyes wide with fear, not even acknowledging him as she rushed by. The man with the crazy hair followed after, pushing Lewis aside as he did so. Lewis stumbled back into a side path in the maze and tripped over his own feet, falling to the floor. The rabbit hopped by him and stopped to look at him a moment. "Terribly sorry," the rabbit said before hurrying on with one fearful backward glance. He looked on with wide eyes as the card soldiers marched past, so intent on catching Alice and those who she ran with that they never looked down to where Lewis still sat in shock.

When the last of them passed him, Lewis got to his knees and peered around the edge of the mirrored wall, fearful of what he might see beyond the mirror's diffuse surface. There was no one else on the other side of the mirror now, except the flowers who again had their faces turned toward the sun.

He looked behind him but he could neither hear nor see Alice or any of those that had exited the mirror with her. He should probably go looking for her. He should make sure she was alright. Turning back toward the mirror, he moved closer again, wondering what else was on the other side besides those flowers and mushrooms. If the flowers had faces, the mushrooms could move, and the rabbits could talk, what other wonders could this land hold that he did not yet know? Hearing sounds behind him, Lewis quickly walked up to the barrier again. He reached out a hand to touch the mirror. It easily passed through and he watched the shadow of his hand on the other side a moment before making a decision.

\*\*\*

Sheriff Tarrant Hightopp shook his head as he walked past the crime scene tape to look into the hall of mirrors attraction. He couldn't believe that something so horrible could have happened here; his own daughter liked to play in this fun house during the day.

His deputy came walking up to him and Tarrant turned toward him. "Find anything out from the girl, Niv?" he asked as his deputy got closer.

Nivens McTwisp shook his head. "Not a thing, Sheriff. She's a raving lunatic. Muttering about talking rabbits and crazy men following her out of mirrors. If she has any idea what happened to the boy, we're not going to get it out of her tonight."

Tarrant nodded as he inspected the inside of the mirror house again. Most of the mirrors were smashed to pieces and there was quite a bit of blood all around. When the mirrors had come down it had unbalanced the whole structure and everything had come falling down after as well. It had taken the crime specialists and detectives hours to dig far enough in to see any evidence of a crime. And the only reason they had gone that far was because the girl kept muttering and crying that her boyfriend had been inside.

The forensic team had taken samples from the crime scene and confirmed the blood to be from a boy by the name of Lewis Carroll, but they had not been able to find a body as of yet. Didn't mean there wasn't one still under all the glass and other rubble, but it would take a while to sort through all that and find out.



# Wings

Today was a big day. Huge, actually. It was the day of her first riding lesson. As Lucy waited impatiently in the car, she played with her new helmet's strap, running the smooth material between her fingers. This was a day that could change her life. Finally her mother got into the car. Starting the engine, she turned to look at her daughter, smiling but with a trace of nervousness in her hazel eyes.



Abbie Branchflower

“Are you excited, Lucy?” she asked, trying to keep her tone light. She didn’t fool her daughter; Lucy knew this day was important, and that a lot of her parents’ hopes were riding on this first lesson just as much as her own. It had taken forever for this day to come about; Lucy had been on the waitlist for over a year. “You bet!” Lucy grinned, but she knew there was a faint tremor in her voice.

Her mother drove carefully as usual, Lucy quiet as she stared out at the passing scenery. Her heart gave a nervous flip as they passed a field of elegant horses, tossing their beautiful heads at the late summer flies. She was soon entranced as they sped by the cross-country field of the same farm, watching the horse and rider pair work in perfect unison as they leapt the piles of brush and various other jumps. *If only*, thought Lucy wistfully. She knew everything there was to know about horses, but to be able to actually ride like that would be incredible!

After what seemed like an eternity Lucy’s mother pulled into a long, shady drive. The green and gold sign cheerily proclaiming “Hollybrook Farms” was just as Lucy had imagined it all those nights of anticipation. Her mother drove slowly up the dirt road, past fields containing small herds of ponies and horses in all sorts of shapes and colours. Lucy thought they were all beautiful. Almost as soon as they parked



and got out of the car, a slim red haired woman emerged from the big barn in front of them. Hastily wiping her hands on her jeans, she waved to them with a big grin.

"Mrs. Wilson," she exclaimed, "and you must be Lucy! What a pleasure to finally meet you!" Lucy was immediately in awe of the woman, something about her just proclaimed *horse person*; and Lucy loved her for it.

"My name is Sophia Granger," the woman had continued, "but you can just call me Sophia, or Soph if you want." Lucy nodded shyly. "Well then, let's head into the barn," Sophia smiled and Lucy's heart jumped, she was so close to that first contact with the horses. Sure, she had pet the fuzzy, round ponies before at petting zoos, but this was somehow so different. This time she would go beyond petting, today she would actually sit astride a horse's back; feel its rolling movement beneath her as she had in so many of her dreams.

The interior of the barn was dim compared to the bright sunlight outside and Lucy had to blink several times to refocus her eyes. After her eyes adjusted, however, she didn't think she'd ever want to close them again. There was just so much to see! It seemed like everywhere she looked there was a friendly horse hanging its head over a half door, curious muzzle outstretched to lip at passing palms for the chance of a treat. Lucy reached up towards one of those soft noses, stretching her fingers to brush against the horse's ticklish whiskers. She giggled as the horse dipped its brown head lower to breathe on her hand.

"That's Truffles," said Sophia, "I think she likes you! She's what we call a bay horse because she is brown with black 'points,' meaning she has a black nose, mane, tail, ears and legs."

"Hi Truffles," breathed Lucy quietly, stroking the mare's face.

"She loves kisses, why don't you give her a quick kiss on her muzzle, that's her nose."

Lucy glanced at her mother, and at her encouraging nod, shyly kissed the tip of the horse's velvety muzzle. To her left a pony the colour of Sophia's auburn ponytail was led out of its stall.

"This is Pumpkin, and my volunteer is Amy," explained Sophia, "Pumpkin is who you will be riding today. He's a real sweetheart." Lucy gave Truffles one last pat on the nose before turning to face the copper coloured pony. Trying to appear confident, she extended her hand. Pumpkin dipped his head to her, blowing his warm breath softly over her palm.

"He's hoping you have treats," laughed Sophia. "Why don't I show you the tack room and we can grab some brushes. I see you brought your own helmet, so we won't need to find you one of ours." Lucy nodded, following Sophia back the way they came into a cozy room, part lounge and part evident storage area for a multitude of horse related items. Sophia handed Lucy a bright orange box of brushes labeled "Pumpkin" on the side and grabbed a small saddle, pink polka dotted saddle pad, and a bridle. She led the way back to the cross-ties, Lucy distracted for a moment by the passing of a huge grey horse.

"He's so big!" she exclaimed. "Who, Maverick?" asked Sophia, "He is quite big, but horses can get much bigger than that too." Before now it had never quite hit Lucy just how tall horses could be. Her stomach squirmed. Pumpkin might be small but what if next week they put her on someone the size of Maverick, or bigger? Sophia must have noticed the look on Lucy's face.

"Don't worry," she smiled, "You'll stick with ponies for now." Lucy breathed a sigh of relief.

Soon she had forgotten she was ever nervous as Sophia taught her how to groom Pumpkin using the various brushes. Pumpkin evidently enjoyed the attention, leaning into the strokes of the tools with his eyes half-closed. Before she knew it they had saddled Pumpkin and Sophia was explaining how to bridle the pony. Someday, she promised, Lucy would be able to do all of this by herself. Lucy wasn't sure, it all seemed so complicated!

Finally it was time to ride. The butterflies returned to Lucy's stomach as she buckled on her shiny new helmet. She patted Pumpkin on the shoulder and was about to rejoin her mother when Amy handed her the reins.

"Where are you going?" teased the girl, "You have to lead your pony into the ring!" Lucy's eyes widened, she'd never walked a pony before! But she was determined to try. Attempting to control the slight tremble in her hands, she gripped the leather strips. "Walk on!" she said to Pumpkin, and to her relief he followed her quietly. They walked through a passageway to their right into a large covered arena. There



Sophia took Pumpkin's reins from her.

"Are you ready?" Lucy nodded, her heart thumping, a mixture of excitement and nervousness coursing through her body. Carefully, her mother helped her out of her wheelchair and up the ramp that she had stopped Pumpkin next to. With Amy's help, she was soon in the saddle, a life-long dream realized. Once she was comfortable, Sophia walked Pumpkin on. Lucy closed her eyes.

"Is everything okay?" asked Lucy's mom, a frown creasing her brow. Lucy nodded, a wide smile slowly spreading across her face. Even with her mom on one side and Amy on the other, she had never felt so free in her life. Soon she would be back in her chair, but she knew that her life had been changed forever.

By: Abbie Branchflower



Allison Shiffer

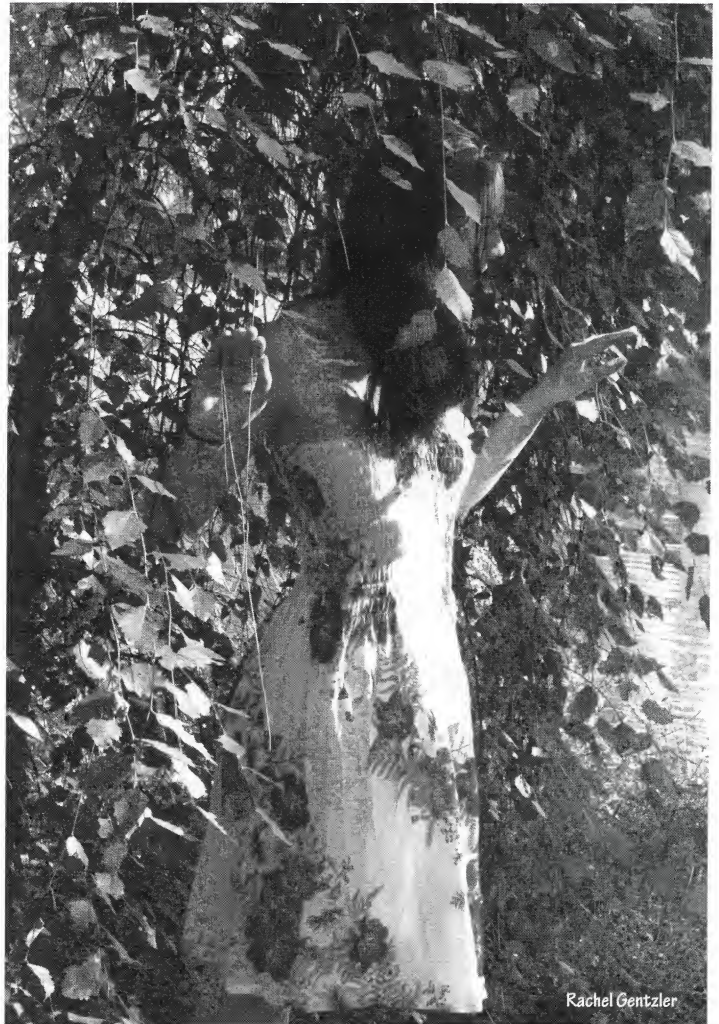


## That T-shirt

By: *Olivia Shaddock*

Well your words are hitting me like debris...  
Like remnants of the past here to haunt me... tease me...  
Pull from me all my sanity and dignity  
And scatter it across the floor.  
I have no answers for you or them or even myself.  
Because I don't know what I want -  
if it's you or just me by myself.  
but I know I don't want her.  
And if she is here, then I must not be...  
I'm sorry, I apologize,  
Because I honestly thought I was in the middle,  
Center stage, with full-on, sweltering spotlight.  
I was very wrong.  
And now you are everywhere I turn.  
Your things all over my room  
(it's been months now)  
Scream to me like parts of my broken heart  
(why didn't I throw it all out?)  
Your t-shirt under my bed haunts me,  
It rattles the bed frame, breaks a hole in my dreams for  
Prince Charming to sneak in.  
So that's how he does it.  
Not the charm or the smile or the bravery –  
It's that damn t-shirt.  
It makes this feel temporary  
But "she" tells me this is permanent.  
And you call me beautiful.  
And dammit, I'm melting.  
But I can't keep falling in love with you.  
I can only handle so many falls before  
I'm nothing except broken.  
I'm already a little broken.  
And this smile doesn't hide the cracks, and this laugh  
doesn't hide the panic.  
And this busy schedule doesn't mean you aren't all over  
my broken mind.

So I've stuffed all the pieces of my shattered heart,  
including that damned t-shirt,  
into a bag with a note.  
When I give it to you, you'll look confused, maybe hurt.  
I'll cry as I walk away.  
But I'll give you the pieces I can afford to live without,  
(The rest are tied up in horses' manes and violin strings)  
And I'll let you keep them instead.  
They're probably quieter for you,  
They won't sneak into your dreams on a white steed.  
And they certainly don't make you cry.  
I'm the one who ended this,  
But I'm the one who can't let go.  
Because you were such a big part of me – so many pieces.  
It's hard to live and be me, not just some of your pieces.  
And I'm allowed to be hurt and sad and angry.  
Because I'm going to miss my pieces.  
But here's your t-shirt back.



Rachel Gentzler



**The best jeans are the ones with rips, holes and worn spots.**



Kathryn Patterson

**Those are the type of jeans that show journeys have been made, obstacles have been overcome and a life was lived.**

**By Olivia Gardner**



## Strangers

*When home feels like a word you only have the right to say in the confines of your closet  
the world is less like a problem you can conquer before breakfast  
when the corner you scraped your knee on in seventh grade is unrecognizable,  
who will believe the memoirs you tell?  
long after the streets that've watched you grow have said their goodbyes  
someone will ask where you've acquired such a twisted tongue  
you don't sound like you're from Brooklyn anymore  
the demolished buildings you once used as landmarks have given you away  
your bed hasn't sat in hollowed chest of a brownstone in years  
you say father too hard to bother claiming a tongue seasoned in Philadelphia  
there is no Yoruba present in your throat  
no immigration letters in your back pocket  
that band building on Ashland isn't there anymore  
you don't have the hurried shuffle of a New Yorker or the birth certificate of a Philadelphian  
where is home when  
the place you learned  
to ride a bike isn't  
where you left it  
when she no longer  
greeted you like a friend  
home for a holiday  
but a stranger  
overstepping  
boundaries  
invading territory  
home no longer  
recognizes me, she  
slants her eyes  
"yeah you look like  
maybe you were mine  
once  
it's possible"  
all fickle and reluctant  
I feel like a stranger in  
my own home  
swallowed by a fast  
pace life I could once manage in my sleep  
I can still remember a time when the city's quiet roar was my lullaby  
what do you call home when years of strong wind have made you two strangers?*



By: Safiya Washington





***It hurts when you hit the bottom***

***Hard to get back up***

***Like the world is holding you down***

***Doesn't want  
you to get up***

***The whole world on your shoulders***

***Trying to get back up***

***Falling down to the cold bottom***

***People don't  
understand***

***Rock Bottom***  
By: Elena Marchewka

***Can't seem to get back up***

Rachel Gentzler



## Trapped on an Island

*Do you ever feel trapped?*

*Trapped like a rat?*

*All alone in a maze in your mind?*

*Trapped in the water paddling to escape the maze?*

*All alone by yourself.*

*Life is like being trapped on an Island all alone.*

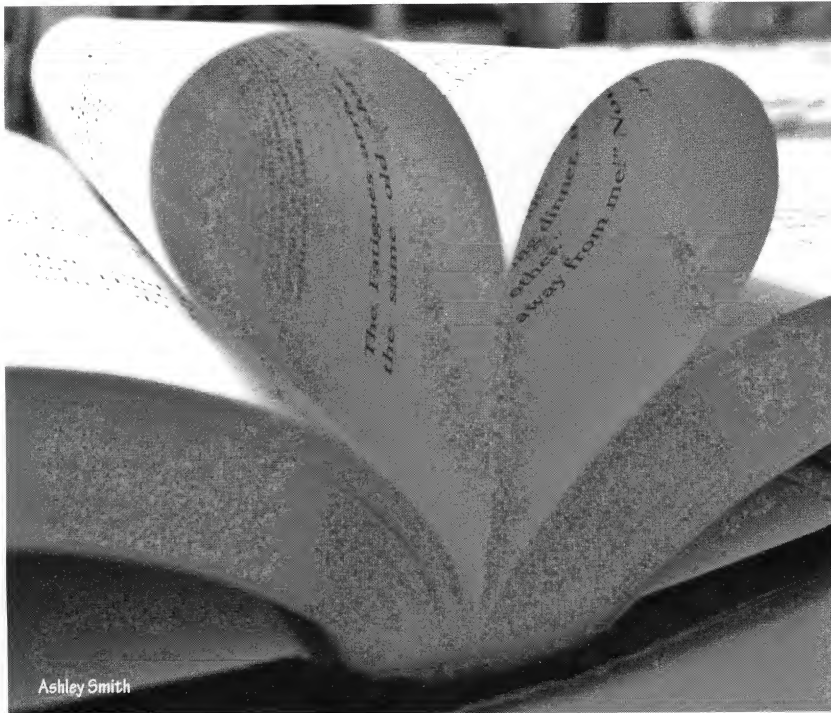
*Can we find the exit to this maze?*

*To escape the Island together.*

*By: Elena Marchewka*



Ashley Smith



Ashley Smith

## Poetry from the Heart

*Poetry comes from the heart,*

*Not the mind or inspiration,*

*Comes from the soul  
and the emotions of one.*

*Poetry is being able to express  
yourself with powerful words.*

*People never understand.*

*Words that people use  
but can't fully comprehend*

*Words are just that.*

*To fully understand me,*

*You need to understand my poetry.*

*Just know my poetry comes  
from my heart.*

*By: Elena Marchewka*





## **Wilting**

*Olivia Banta*

In the beginning,  
the petals are a deep red.  
They look healthy,  
and are ready to open.  
They look like love,  
and make you feel loved.

As it blooms,  
the true nature shows.  
You see the blood red,  
you see the real thing.  
You find yourself content,  
happy to let it open up,  
and open up your heart.

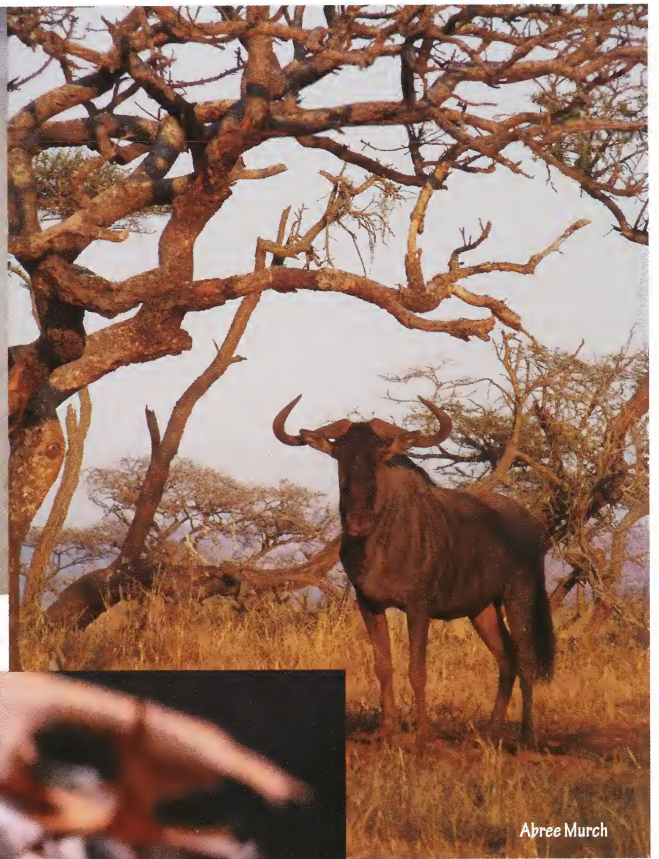
But in the end,  
everything dies.  
The rose wilts away,  
and the red turns to a black.  
The happiness turns to sadness,  
the joy turns to sorrow.



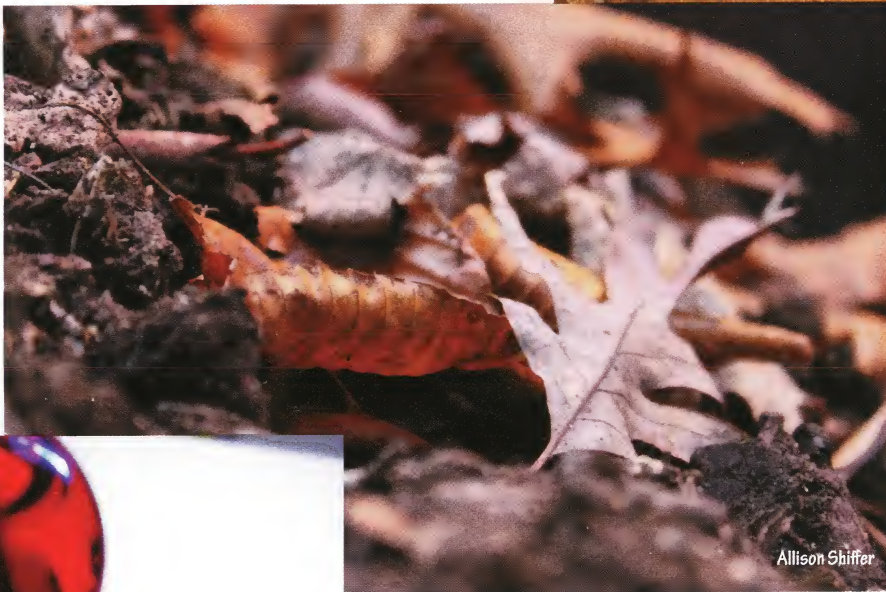




Marissa Farra



Abree Murch



Allison Shiffer



Ashley Smith



Ashley Smith





Emily Szalc



Kristen Ryerson



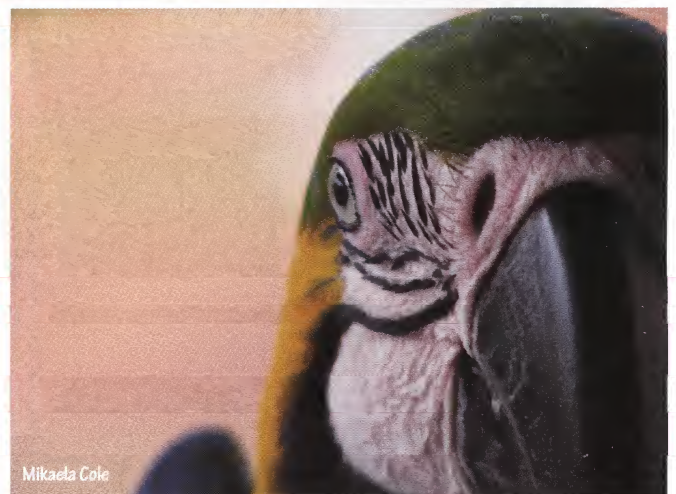
Emily Szalc



Kristy Hood



Marissa Farra



Mikaela Cole



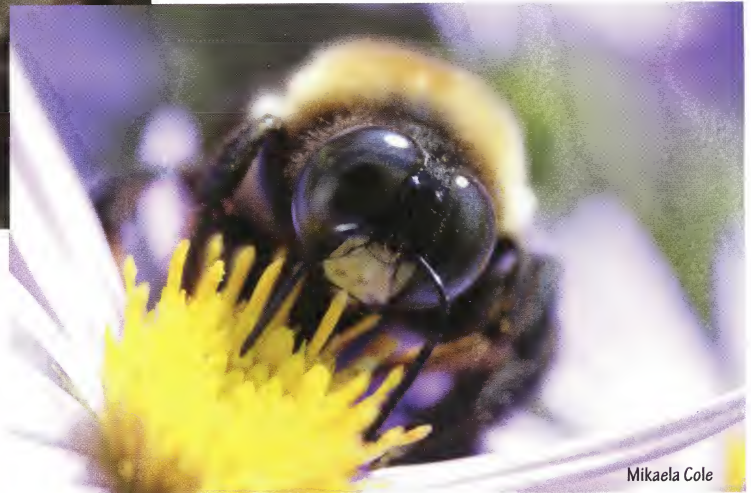


Kristy Hood





Mikaela Cole



Mikaela Cole



Mimi Hanrahan

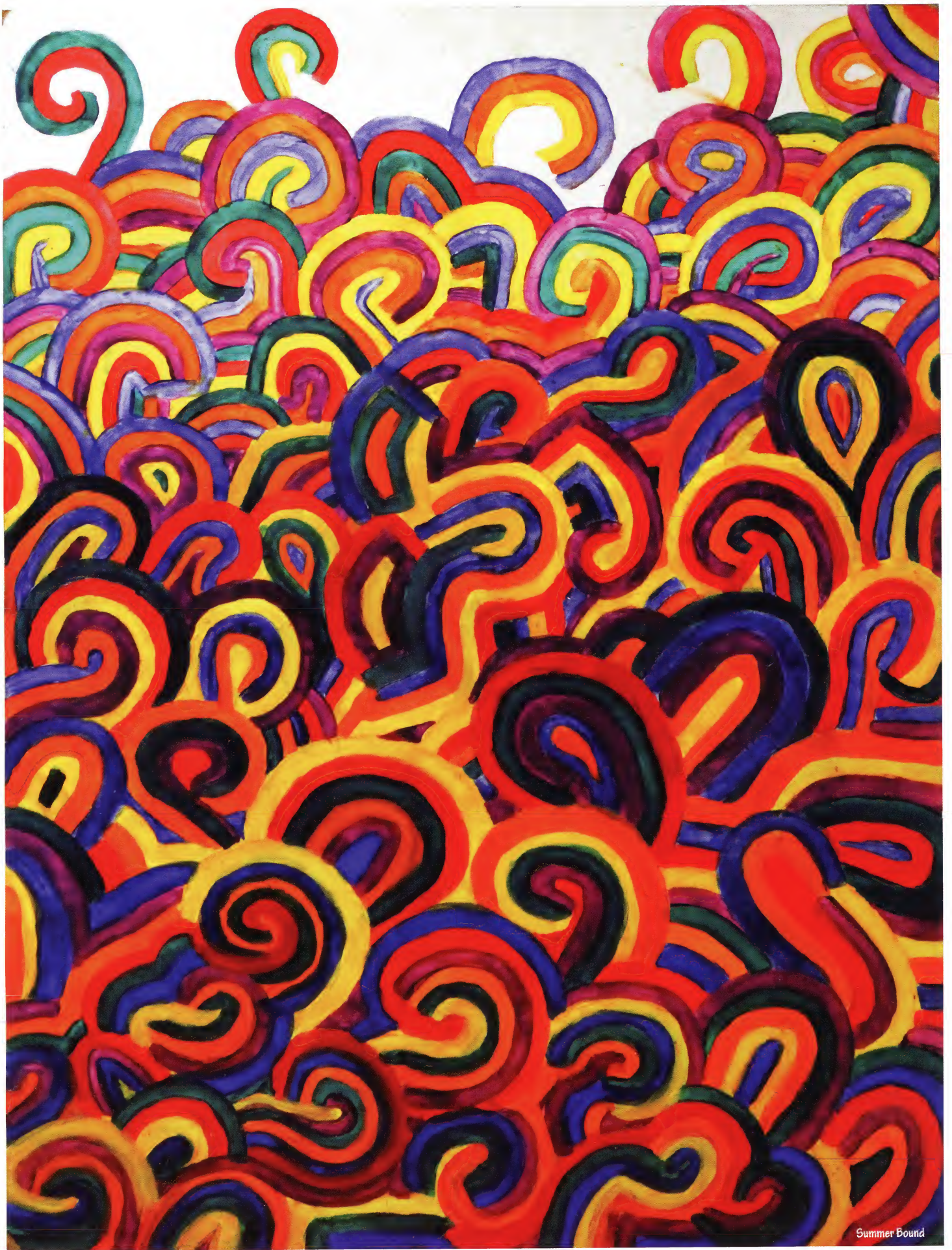


Rachel Gentzler



Rachel Gentzler





Summer Bound





Heather Vorwerk

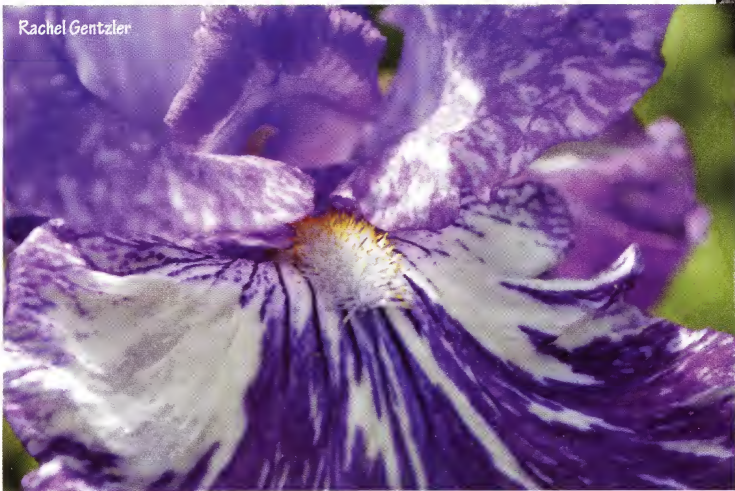




Caitlin Wargo



Shaaron Parker



Rachel Gentzler



Ashley Falkowetz



Rachel Gentzler





Rachel Gentzler



Abree Murch



Kathryn Patterson



Marissa Farra



# Oh Moustache, My Moustache

*Rachel Gentzler*

But look at how the wind blows through thick hair  
Gently sweetly across from cheek to cheek  
Moving sweeping in the winter night's cool air.  
So strong the strands hold back the wind, not weak.

A soft and warm sweet scarf against the night,  
That rests between the nose and upper lip.  
To keep those lips still pink without frost bite  
Just like a pie that's topped with sweet Cool Whip.

How the lip would surely become so cold  
If you did not remain still on the face  
Until the years have passed, and both so old  
I should hope forever you stay in place.

Moustache, oh my moustache, like Tom Selleck  
Always will you be a timeless relic.



Sarah Berry



# Drawn

Olivia Banta

Nate was ready to give up fishing until a tug had been made on the line. He looked into the water curiously but saw nothing. Once more a tug was given to the pole and he then saw the blue fin disappear.

"Dammit!" he swore as he pulled the line up. By the looks of it, it was a big fish and that's why he'd come on this fishing trip. He normally never went alone but he just needed some time to himself. He'd been out here for two hours and so far nothing. He decided to just put the pole away and sit down and relax. He pulled out his sketch book and set to work on one of his latest drawings. His friend, Dylan, had told him about a myth that surrounded this area.

The myth told of a mermaid. A gorgeous young woman with long, flowing blonde hair and these mesmerizing blue eyes. It was said she sang with the wind and around your boat and you could see them dancing on waves. She'd preyed on many before and many had fallen victim to her voice. Nate shook his head, laughing at the stupid story. There was no way something like that existed in this age. It was probably some kids playing some prank.

He admired the drawing of the girl as he filled in her upper half. Her long hair fell to just above her hips. There her skin transformed into a long fin. He'd made her scales blue just a shade darker than her eyes. He had her placed on a wave in the drawing with her arms out to her sides. He looked closely at the drawing, noticing the similarities in his girlfriend, Lauren. He'd be going back home to her in a few more hours to spend the rest of the night with her.

As the wind swept around him, his papers blew, covering up the face of the mermaid he had drawn. A strange humming came with the wind and he looked out into the ocean before him. He felt dread set in but he calmed himself down. He laughed it off the best he could and put his drawing supplies away. Maybe he would head back now.

The wind blew again and once more he heard a strange noise. This time, however, there was a soft chanting mixed with it. This once perfect day was now creeping him out. He quickly put his stuff away into the storage he had on the boat. He looked back out into the ocean, seeing the small tidal waves. Nothing was wrong...he was being foolish. Either way, he decided he'd head back now. As he was heading to the bow he saw something swim alongside his vessel. He looked down but saw nothing. He heard a splash and ran to the other side. Again he saw dark blue fins disappearing. He ran his hands through his hair, agitated.

"Calm down, Nate...it's nothing..." he said. He finished his walk to the bow and turned the key. The engine was turning but didn't start. He looked back for the can of extra fuel he kept and saw it was gone. He knew he had brought it with him! He always did! Lauren even checks for it! He felt the nausea take over and he sat down and ran his hands through his wavy brown hair. Suddenly, he heard a splash and looked up.

There before him was the most beautiful creature he'd seen. She had long, wavy, shiny blonde hair. Her eyes were a light, sky blue with a smile that complimented her eyes. He stood up warily, wondering who she was.

"Hi..." he said tentatively. She looked at him, not replying, with those haunting blue eyes and the sweet smile. He moved closer to the side to see more of her. He prayed she had fallen off a boat and he was her rescuer. When he got to the side he saw the girl's full body. She was now lying on her back keeping herself afloat. Her long hair cascaded down over her breasts, hiding them from view. Half way down her body her torso turned into a long dark blue fin. A fin! He felt like he might pass out, realizing the myths were true. She did exist!

She turned upright and moved closer to his boat. He stood locked in place as she came closer to him and looked up at him. Her beauty was out of this world. Her eyes, her hair, her smile, Nate was entranced by her. It was then he remembered some more of the legend.

*When they know what they want they will do whatever it takes to have it and protect it. They're known as sirens. They hunt after the young and handsome sailors and when they find one they will do whatever it takes to get the man to be with her.*

He had to leave before she took hold of him! He broke eye contact and ran for the front once again trying to turn the engine over. No use. He heard a soft chanting once more and turned around. She was perched on the side of his boat with her arms. He couldn't make out the words of her chanting but found himself being drawn to her. He stopped before her and she quieted down. He knelt down before her and looked into her wondrous eyes. The next thing he knew, she hissed and arms were being wrapped around him and he was drawn into the cold, salty water.

Sarah Berry





## ***Push and Pull***

***By Mikaela Cole***

***I step out into the sun.  
Leave the life I've lived.  
Lose the me I've been.  
Drop the mask I've worn.***

***Run away.***

***The road winds beneath my feet,  
dwindles beneath my feet,  
roots and vines bar my path.***

***Run away.***

***My feet blister, I stumble,  
My hands catch thorns.  
Clawing my way back to open space.***

***Run away.***

***Exhaustion drags me to the earth,  
It won't stop me.  
It won't stop me.***

***Keep moving. Away, away.***

***The cool grass soothes my feet.  
The chilled stream cleans my hands.  
The cold night quiets my mind.***

***Keep moving.***

***No turning back; no place known to turn,  
The body aches, the soul questions, the mind hopes.  
A journey away; away has passed and gone.***

***Where to?***



# *Kindness*

*By Olivia Gardner*

*Whether it's random or a routine  
One small action could change someone's life  
Start with a smile, maybe offer to help, ask how their day went and  
Care when everything falls apart  
Life is not easy; it's like an airplane ride,  
You go up until you reach the highest point in life,  
You may hit some turbulence in the middle and then you go down.  
When somebody shows kindness throughout the ride  
It's like you looked out the plane window and saw a sunrise so beautiful  
That you had to stop and stare.*



Mikaela Cole





## *Crossing Bridges*

*Olivia Banta*

*I walked calmly around the garden that had once belonged to the great French Impressionist painter, Claude Monet. My Aunt and Uncle now owned the land and his old home with one of the museums of France. They took care of the land and the tours that were regularly held. I would visit Giverny, France every summer for a month or two. Most of my time was spent within the garden. Now at the age of 18 and ready to go to college, as a graphic arts major none the less, I wanted to draw the famous bridge.*

*As I neared the famous pond and bridge my heart sped up. I'd seen it hundreds of times but there was just something about it that always enthralled me. I walked across the path and railway into the blooming garden, the huge grin slowly tugging at my mouth.*

*Monet had rented the house and land in 1883 and ten years later bought that land and the land across the railway and built the garden that had inspired Water Lilies, a series of paintings that he had painted in the last thirty years of his life. One thing that had always made me respect him more was the fact that he had painted with cataracts yet everything held color and life. No mistakes were present within the paintings and it astounded me.*



*It was mid May so everything was in full bloom. From the Wisterias, to bamboo wood, the weeping willows, and the ever famous nymphéas, water lilies. As I neared the pond I felt the tranquility of the garden fall over me. I giggled as a butterfly flew near me and danced around me as it went on to one of the wisterias. I moved closer to the bridge and settled myself beneath a weeping willow across from the bridge. I was at an angle with the bridge as the sun cast its rays over it. It wasn't the best of angles but I liked it. It was something different than what Monet had once painted.*

*I opened up my messenger bag and pulled out my sketch book and the little box that held my pencils. I opened it up and pulled out one of my new pencils and opened up the sketch book. I was nearing the end of the book with how much I would sit and sketch. Looking at the bridge, I decided where to start. Mid-day rays streamed over the bridge, casting it within a halo.*

*I looked back up, not liking the angle and the sun on it, and stood up. I grabbed my bag and closed my book, making my way to where Monet had stood to paint the bridge. As I neared the spot I saw a tall man with a long gray beard with an easel and canvas. On his hand sat a palette with a rainbow of colors on it.*

*I looked up and noticed the sun had not moved. My heart started to beat rapidly as I neared the man curiously. Nobody was allowed on the land this time of day, let alone this day. You needed a pass to even be here but it didn't look like he had one. When I got closer to the man and saw the face of him, everything fell from my arms. My jaw dropped and curiosity, happiness, and worry took over.*

*"Bonjour!" the man said.*

*"Claude Monet?" I asked. The man simply nodded and smiled at me. He turned back to his canvas and painted more greens onto it. I could not believe it. There was no way this man was him. He had to be some kind of imposter or killer! I stepped back to my bag and pulled out my phone. I went to make a call but there was no service at all. That wasn't right! What was going on? I put it down and decided to run for the house, but as I neared the path and looked across the street, something was off. The house was not as ornate as it should have been or up to date. I turned around and saw that even the garden was not as filled as it was.*

*"Est quelque chose de mal?" the man asked, looking back at me. (Is something wrong?)*

*I breathed a sigh of relief, thanking my Aunt and Uncle for convincing me to take two French classes in high school. It was simple French, this sentence, and I hoped my pronunciations came out right.*

*"En quelle année est-il?" I asked. He looked at me concerned and worried and then turned back to the painting once more.*

*"1899."*

*There was no way this was happening! How the heck did I go from 2012 to 1899 in a matter of minutes? The panic set in and I wondered what I was going to do. Would I be stuck here? It would be fun, don't get me wrong, but I needed to go back to my life. Someone please tell me I'm dreaming! I even pinched my arm but nothing happened. Okay,*



this was getting weird. The curiosity took over the worry as I walked back to the man. I saw the swirls of greens, reds, and blues on the white canvas. I looked up and saw the old version of the bridge before its restoration.

“Êtes-vous peindre...le pont?” I asked, struggling to remember my advanced French. ‘Are you painting the bridge?’. Was I witnessing the painting of the bridge?

“Nul, Juste de l’eau et des fleurs,” he replied gruffly. ‘No, just the...water and the flowers’. That deflated my hopes but I went on anyway to ask why.

“Pourquoi? Le pont...serait un atout très...agréable pour...cette peinture!” I replied, hoping to get my words right. I had asked him why and said the bridge would be a lovely asset to this painting. He seemed to understand me though as he soon replied.

“Je n’avais pas songé à peindre le pont ... peut-être que je devrais! Merci!” he replied. ‘I had not thought of painting the bridge ... Perhaps I should! Thank you!’ Soon, he had the bridge started above the water.

“Je suis un étudiant en art moi-même. J’aime vos travaux!” I said, breaking the weird silence that hung among us. He looked at me intrigued that I had said I was an art student and I liked his works.

“Merci! Combien de temps avez-vous peint?” he asked. ‘How...long have I...drawn?’ I translated in my head. Years now. My father had taught me as a child and I kept up with it all throughout school and until now.

“Ans! J’aime peindre la nature!” I replied, smiling. I had told him painting nature was one of my favorite items to draw.

“Comme c’est le mien. Un jour, Boudin m’a dit, ‘Apprendre à dessiner bien et apprécier la mer, la lumière, le ciel bleu. ‘J’ai suivi son conseil. Et je suis ici,” he said, smiling back at me, a twinkle in his eyes. ‘One day...Boudin said to me, ‘Learn to draw well and appreciate the sea, the light, the blue sky.’ I took his advice’.

A famous Monet quote! Monet had just spoken one of his many quotes to me! This was amazing! Meeting Monet and getting a quote in one day? It was the best thing to happen to me! I was thrilled as he put the finishing touches on the bridge. He started to work on the water once more. I looked up at the bridge happily. In some twisted way I had helped Monet paint the Japanese Bridge into Water Lilies!

I startled as something wet landed on my face. I blinked my eyes groggily and sat up rubbing them. Another wet drop hit my face and I looked up to see gray clouds slowly creeping over the sun. I sighed and started to pack my items as the heavens opened up. I quickly slung my bag over my shoulder and looked out at the bridge. My long auburn hair was now soaked and clinging to my eyes as I tried to brush it away and look at the pond. The rain was bouncing off the pond in rhythm. It was a scene I’d love to paint one day but for now, I needed to get inside and dried off!



## *The Tides of Winter* Mikaela Cole

*This warm patch of Summer, streaming in through the glass of a closed window;*

*It speaks of sadness and farewell, as the tide of Winter rises, lapping at our cold fingers through the frozen pane.*

*But step back; keeping to your lit square of carpet, you might remain longer without the bitter chill to chase you away.*

*Waves push forward over waves - an age lost to fate? What nonsense!*

*You will not be reconciled, right? How can you willingly!*

*The gladiator, badly beaten, does not drop his sword while there is yet hope for glory.*

*Maybe one day I will stop to rest, perhaps; that day is the end-of-life moment.*

*You may no longer gleam brilliantly with life, my friend, my armor; but the loss in my mind carries not the weight of a single cent. Stepping back, allowing the numbing waves of grief to recede, the memories you have left me shine ardently, with a strength not born of metals.*

## *Passing By* Mikaela Cole

Death presents me with a blank canvas. The vivid aftermath of loss trails a potent array of venom behind its brush, making more beautiful the mural upon my heart for its searing reality. Sorrows pass by in mournful admiration this paint-encrusted memorial, your place in my heart, a creation ever-fixed with joyous memories; indelible and unique.

## *Savior - Mikaela Cole*

His eyes gleam, green jewels in the dim light. I scream and shriek, tell him to leave, to run; but no sound falls from my lips. He can't hear me. He just stands; steps closer, arms reaching for me. I can only watch; no sound, no control, my body moves on its own. Strings contort and pull. My grip tightens; a long, slender spear points to his chest. Stop! Stay away! I can't resist the movements, a mere puppet, dancing to my master's whim. Run! But he is only closer, closer, reaching out to save this empty shadow of myself. Please. Please, stop being so damned faithful. So courageous, you won't abandon me. No! The strings twist in vicious triumph, and the metal pierces his chest. No, please...I crumple to the ground, my lines severed by the blade in his hand. He goes to his knees, eyes bright with pain, fading, falling beside me. But he smiled a smile so sincere.



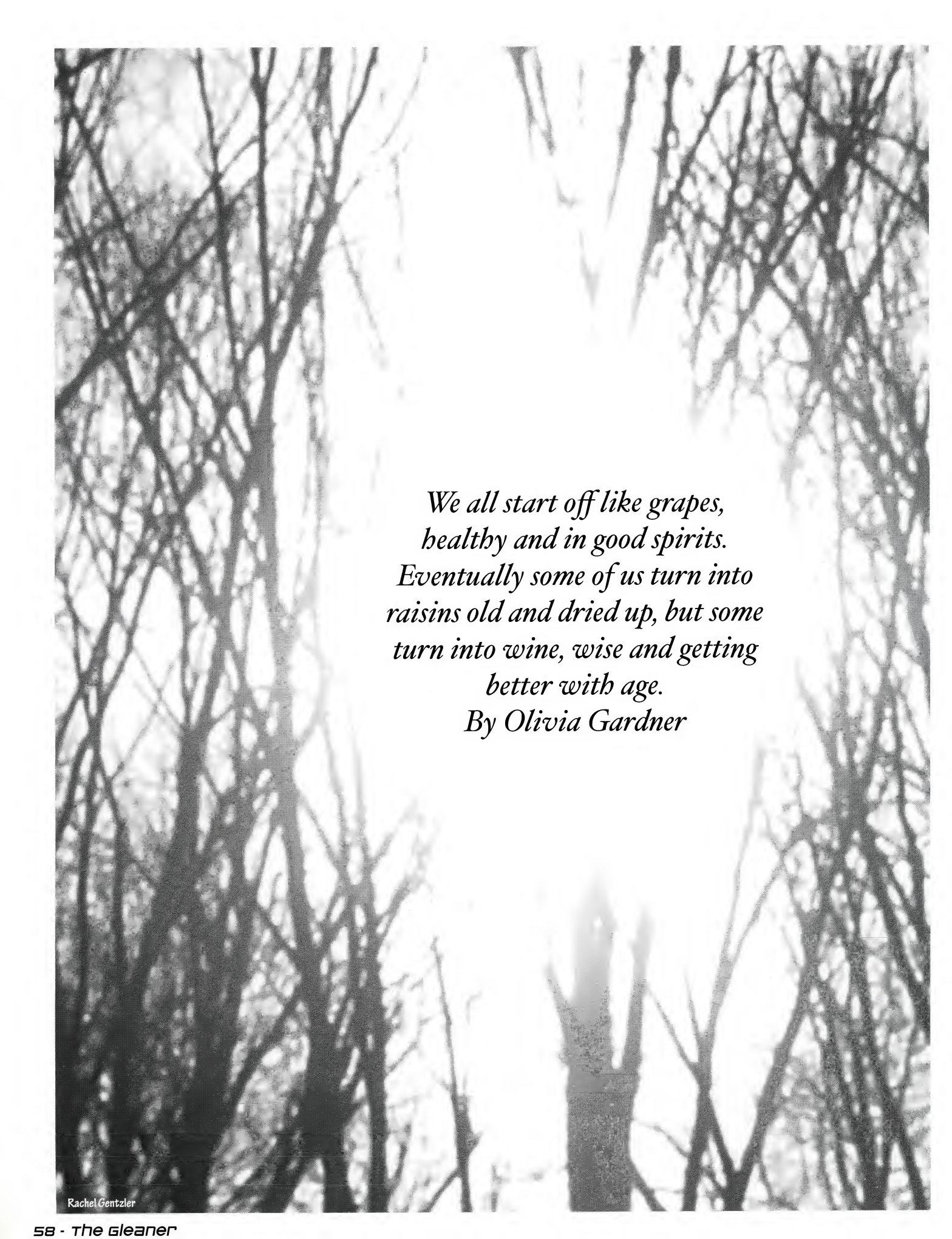
## *Your Hero*

*By: Elena Marchewka*

*I can be your hero  
Your knight in shining armor  
Your anything and everything  
Your protector  
To keep you safe from harm  
Keeping you safe in my arms  
I'd do anything for you because you're my hero too.*







*We all start off like grapes,  
healthy and in good spirits.  
Eventually some of us turn into  
raisins old and dried up, but some  
turn into wine, wise and getting  
better with age.  
By Olivia Gardner*





# *All Gravity*

*By: Safiya Washington*

Rachel Gentzler

*The person immediately before you  
Is adolescence  
her hands are softer than yours  
tongue laced in southern drawl  
an echoing melodic laugh I've always tried to find the origin of but never could  
Bad Bedtimes stories twelve years too late  
Care packages filled with crayons and coloring too abstract to be appreciated  
It was all unbalanced  
A seesaw always tipped her way  
Evidence that someone could love all the ugly marinating in me  
Evidence that I could be just as vile as all the people I'd become unbalanced for*

*The one before her was all rushed and clumsy  
comforting kisses turned relationship  
Her face is thinner than yours  
she wears less confidence  
She's made of less substance and showed her battle wounds more often  
We were a game of push and pull that lasted way longer than it should have  
She isn't good enough for me  
She's always known that*

*The one before her shouldn't have happened  
she was a suicide bomber  
looking to carve a casket out of my chest  
too timid to do anything with but share space  
it was survival  
In the end I couldn't respect her  
I don't look her in the eye anymore*

*The one before her technically didn't happen  
He's the closet you  
Shorter  
darker  
we made a lover's nest of public restrooms  
He is the restricted section in every video store  
He didn't mean anything by it*



*Like us He's in love now  
He's found a nest better suited for sunlight and is radiant*

*The one before him  
is nine years older than he should be  
We were newborns testing our struts  
We tap danced on technicalities  
Like you and I do now  
I gave my pulse to save him when the weight of us was too much for him  
It took me two years to be able to say his name out loud  
There are still nightmares*

*The person before him  
was a stolen snack before dinner  
borrowed money you knew you had to give back  
it wasn't love  
it was temporary  
entertainment when the world was too serious  
She hasn't found a home to have dinner at yet  
She's starving for something of substance*

*The person before him  
Has never answered my texts  
He and I never folded ourselves into one another  
never shared our fears in hopes of having them dissolve behind quick kisses  
never planned our future  
it was all one sided  
unrequited  
A seesaw stuck tipping my way  
A reason to cut myself  
To let ideas of love rot under the slightest bit of pressure  
She's the reason I make you promise you won't wake up tomorrow and feel differently  
the reason I might wake up tomorrow and feel differently  
The reason all of this is new territory  
The reason I'm overly aware of everywhere you've been before you were with me  
The reason I'd rather stop breathing than tell you you've become my air.  
The reason you've done all the research about our future alone  
The reason I second-guess you when you tell me you find everything about me beautiful  
The reason I get sad some days and can't explain why  
The fear that stops me from losing my mind in love and trusting that you'll be there  
The reason I know you're a good person worthy of more than what I'm giving  
you're nothing like them  
one of the many reasons my pulse shakes every time you're around  
Your smile is a reason to fly  
They are the reason I've stayed grounded*





Kristy Hood

## **“Kuroshitsuji, A Demon’s Fairy Tale”**

**by Mikaela Cole**

**Once upon a time in a land far away there lived an old man and an even older woman. The woman was not like the man. The man failed to realize this.**

**Once upon a time in a land far away there lived an old man and an even older woman. They mourned a child gone to war; not because he had gone, but because he had never returned.**

**Once upon a time in a land far away there lived an old man and an even older woman. They had many neighbors, who visited them, and left them afterwards.**

**Once upon a time in a land far away there was famine. An old man grew weaker, and the neighbors who visited stopped visiting.**

**Once upon a time in a land far away there was misunderstanding. There were whispers. An older woman took meat from the empty forest, growth from the empty soils, and tended the old man who grew weaker.**

**Once upon a time in a land far away there was jealousy. There were outcries. A human watched, and became something less than human.**

**Once upon a time in a land far away there lived an old man. He tended a garden, and kept it as a shrine to the older woman who was not like him. Frogs and birds came to the garden.**

**Once upon a time in the land far away, a human witnessed their tragedy, and did nothing.**

**Once upon a time in the land far away, I kept silent.**

**In the village that cried ‘Witch’.**





Emily Szalc

## Heart Beat

*By: Mikaela Cole*

When my heart stops beating  
I am sure it must have loved this world

With every beat, it shouts "I'm alive"  
With every beat, it vows "I'm in love"  
With every beat, it begs "Stay with me"  
With every beat, it cries "Life"  
With every beat, it sings "Life"

In duet, your voice responds,  
"Life"  
"Life"  
With each beat we grow closer,  
Closer to understanding,  
Closer to harmony.

And with this song I could live forever.  
But one day, you could not.



Everything I see reminds me of you  
I'm sure I must be blinded  
By the eyes of the beholder  
For the beauty I found only in you  
Now resounds throughout this earth

I cry, trying to cleanse my eyes  
of their colored perceptions.  
But try as I might to cast these memories aside,  
they remain.  
And even after I have thrown them away,  
they are precious.  
Their pain engraved strongly upon my beating heart.

This pain  
To stay on living  
Without you  
These memories do nothing but hurt me  
And I can only cringe, curling inwards,  
clinging to them and holding them to me.

So that one day  
one day  
The searing brands  
reminders of your absence  
Might one day cool  
And my heart will be strong enough  
to bear them, even when  
stray sparks should set them aflame once more

The one in this world,  
That I wished most to protect.  
Who I didn't know how to save.

Each and every day,  
This world reminds me more and more of you.  
With every beat, my heart sings,  
"Thank you"

And that is why I am sure  
That even when my heart stops beating  
I know it must have loved this world



**An excerpt from: THE PYTHON POINT**  
**Ariel Mixon**

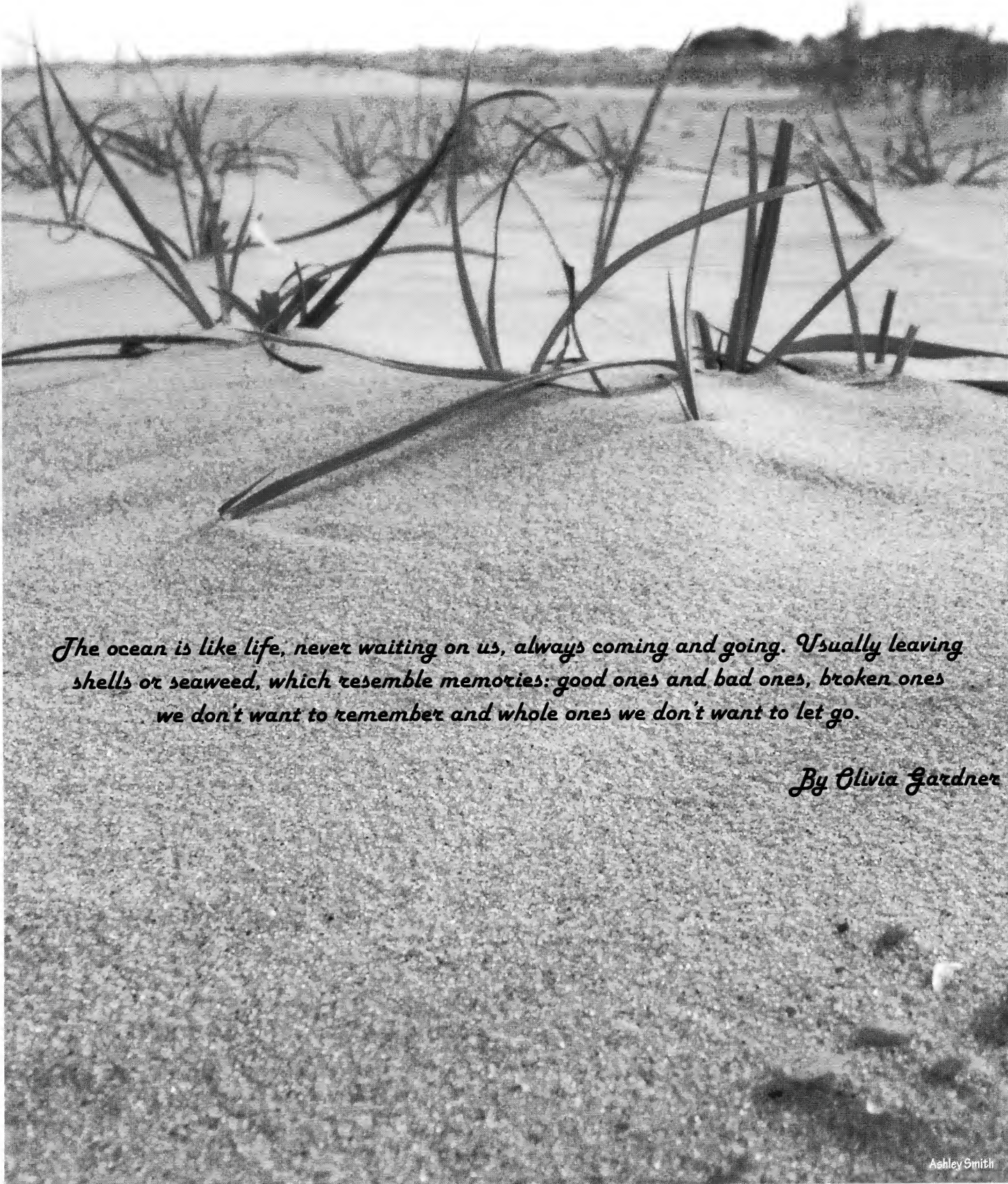
**Invasive species devastate ecosystems, sometimes to the point of no return. "It took 30 years for the brown tree snake to be implicated in the nearly complete disappearance of mammals and birds on Guam; it has apparently taken only 11 years since pythons were recognized as being established in the Everglades for researchers to implicate pythons in the same kind of severe mammal declines," said Robert Reed, a USGS scientist. Many people in the United States feel the need, for whatever reason, to buy imported, wild animals and keep them as "pets." One veterinarian by the name of Dr. Molnar even said, "Yes, exotic animals should be kept as pets, private ownership helps in conservation, education, and propagation of exotic pets. A lot of exotic pets are alive today due to private ownership" (Hess 6). Some states, such as Florida and Ohio, allow for the importation of exotic pets, and others have strict laws against it. Sometimes, these pets end up in the wild and disturb natural ecosystems.**

**Among these pets is the Burmese Python. The Burmese Python is a giant snake originally from the jungles of Southeast Asia, ranging anywhere from 16 to 23 feet long, and weighing up to 200 lbs. This is a very large predator and attacks on handlers/owners are not uncommon ("Burmese Python"). The problem with owning these snakes as pets is that they are wild animals and are not domesticated in any way. Many owners find these snakes unmanageable, and end up releasing them into the wild, particularly, the Florida Everglades. These snakes became very popular, and many were released into Florida, so much so that these pythons now have an established population and are devouring many indigenous Florida species. Among these Floridian animals being consumed is the endangered "wood rat." (Ironically this is the same animal that the Animal Management Department is trying to breed here at Del Val.)**

**The concepts and theories Malcolm Gladwell develops in *The Tipping Point* are applicable to the spread of Burmese pythons in the United States. It can be applied to the three main concepts Gladwell illustrates: The Law of the Few, The Stickiness Factor, and Power of Context. Burmese Python expansion in the United States can be applied to the Law of the Few because Burmese Pythons have high reproductive potential. It can be applied to Stickiness because predators of Burmese Pythons are virtually non-existent and the native animals that pythons prey on are "naïve" when it comes to avoiding these stealthy, foreign snakes. Lastly, it can be applied to the Power of Context because certain parts of the United States have a similar climate compared to their original habitats and invasive pythons are the only giant constrictors that are established in the United States.**

**The Tipping Point is the study of theories and concepts that are fundamental to the understanding of epidemics. According to Gladwell, epidemics have certain characteristics. These characteristics are: contagiousness, little changes have big effects, and change happens not gradually, but at one dramatic moment (Gladwell 9). One might guess the name he uses to describe this dramatic moment - "The Tipping Point" (Gladwell 19). Gladwell goes on to say, "But the world of the Tipping Point is a place where unexpected becomes expected, where radical change is more than a possibility. It is - contrary to all our expectations - a certainty (13,14).**





*The ocean is like life, never waiting on us, always coming and going. Usually leaving shells or seaweed, which resemble memories: good ones and bad ones, broken ones we don't want to remember and whole ones we don't want to let go.*

*By Olivia Gardner*





## His Princess By Stacey Cornwell

“CINDER!”

Eldan shot up out of bed and looked around his dimly lit room. He could just make out the shapes of his closet and table; light filtered in through a curtain hung over a small round window on the other side of the room. Stumbling over to it, he pulled the curtain aside and squinted his gray-green eyes at the bright light beyond.

Realizing it was much later in the day than he had thought it was, he dashed to his closet and pulled out a pair of moth eaten slacks and a shirt patched many times over. Dipping both hands in the wash bowl, he ran them quickly through his hair to tame his dark, messy curls that had gotten long.

“Cinder!” echoed through the house again.

Eldan grabbed his door and hurried down the narrow stairs to the second floor of the house that his mother had once owned and that he was now made to act like a servant in. He could tell it was one of his two step-brothers calling, because they liked to call him Cinder.

“There you are, you lazy lout!” Gorin said as he grabbed his shirt and shoved him across the hall to the stairs leading down. “Father has been looking for you; you were supposed to go to town this morning. Father sent Jorin, who was none too happy to have to go. Now, get down to the farm and do your chores before either finds you.”



Running down the stairs, Eldan took the long way through the house to avoid his step-father's study on his way out the back doors to the barn. Once in the safety of the barn and the familiar sounds and smells of the horses, Eldan breathed a sigh of relief; it was the only place besides his room where he felt safe.

Eldan had gotten through cleaning all the horses' stalls except for one when the outer doors banged open and a gust of cold wind invaded the once humid barn. Two sets of heavy footfalls neared the stall where Eldan stood waiting, and twin heads looked around the corner at him. They both smiled with a devious, evil light in their eyes and Eldan unconsciously grabbed the rake he'd been using tighter.

"Come with us, dear brother," Jorin said as he reached in to grab Eldan's arm. "Father has a job for you."

Dreading what new scheme the brothers had come up with to torture him, Eldan tried to not trip as Jorin continued to drag him into the house and into their father's study. Once inside, Jorin let go and took one of the two chairs sitting in front of his father's desk. Eldan's step father was sitting behind the desk looking up at him with a particularly disgusted look.

Usually his step-father was able to tolerate his presence as long as he did his chores and stayed out of sight. Gorin sat in the remaining seat, leaving Eldan standing before them, sweating and shaking.

"Do you know who our princess is?" his step-father finally asked.

Eldan blinked. Was that supposed to be some kind of trick question? "Which one, step-father?" Eldan asked.

"Which one!" he asked, surprised. "Why, the only one that matters right now."

Alusia had no princes, but twelve princesses that were said to be each more beautiful than the last. It was tradition in Alusia that a prince or princess must marry before their twenty-third birthing day or they would not be able to inherit the throne. Princess Bellinda had refused to take a husband and no man would take Princess Meriel because of her magic. That left Princess Thalia, the third born on the cusp of her twenty-third birthing day and on the lookout for a husband so she could be named heir.

"Princess Thalia?" Eldan hazarded.

"Precisely," his step-father said triumphantly. "And wouldn't it just be a coincidence if that very princess were here in our province now."

Eldan blinked; he had not realized that the princess would be coming out to the provinces to find a husband. She must be getting desperate indeed if she was willing to take herself away from her palace for this.

"She's hosting a ball for all eligible men to attend, and we're going to go," Gorin said with a wide smile on his face. Jorin and their father echoed that same smile and Eldan was starting to understand what they were up to. Over the years the two brothers had enacted many marriage schemes with their father's encouragement. None had come to anything, but Eldan knew from experience that when they decided to pursue a certain woman, that she stood very little chance



of getting away unscathed and this time they were pursuing a princess with the goal of marriage and a life even more luxurious than the one they already led.

“Now, toward that end we have a list of things you need to go into town and arrange right away,” Jorin smirked as he handed over a stack of paper. Resigned to it, Eldan took them and turned around, ready to head into town even though it was too late in the day to get back before sundown, which was exactly what the twins were planning and probably why they had waited most of the day to spring the news.

\*\*\*

Princess Thalia looked at herself in the mirror and frowned. She had her long, golden blonde hair tied back and under a dark hood to hide her blue eyes and unblemished skin. Her embroidered dress that she had traveled in was hanging outside her closet to be cleaned of all the dust that travel had put into it and she was now wearing a pair of brown leggings and a dark green shirt. It was nothing like what she usually wore to court, but Thalia still thought that it wasn't much as far as disguises went.

“Are you sure this is good enough, Meriel? I still think I look like myself,” Thalia looked to her sister who sat on her bed in a green silk gown that complimented her fiery red hair and sea green eyes. Meriel was her elder sister and should by rights be the one married and heir to the throne of Alusia, but all the men she had courted had been too afraid of her magic to want any kind of relationship with her and her twenty-third birthing day had come and gone without her nuptials. Meriel shook her head. “That's because you see yourself every day, silly. These people only see you as the fancy dresses you wear and the crown on your head. Take those off and put on common clothes and no one will know who you are.”

Meriel's logic seemed irrefutable and Thalia shrugged after looking at her reflection one last time. The only way she would know if it worked or not would be to actually walk outside and see how others reacted toward her. Saying goodbye to her sister, she walked out of her room and down the servant stairs to the back entrance of the townhouse they were staying at. She opened the door a crack to check for people before slipping out of the townhouse.

Walking through the streets of the town, Thalia watched the people go about their daily lives, ignorant to her walking through the crowds or who she even was. For the first time in her life, Thalia walked among her people unknown and was able to get a firsthand look at how they went about their daily lives.

Watching a mother fix her child's shirt, she ran into something and went crashing backwards to the ground. The yelp and thud of other things falling told Thalia she had walked into another person. Looking over, she saw a young man about her age in a pair of holey pants and a patch shirt that she could not even tell what the original shirt color could have been. There were also a number of packages strewn all over the street around them.

The young man hurriedly got to his knees and started collecting his bags and boxes, his cheeks turning a deep scarlet as he worked. “I'm so sorry, miss,” he said in a low voice as he tried to gather all his things as quickly as he could. “I should have been paying better attention to where I was going. Are you alright?” he finally looked up and Thalia looked into the most amazing set



of eyes she had ever seen. They were a dark gray flecked with different shades of green and they were like nothing she had ever seen before. His curly dark hair flopped into his eyes as he ducked his head again and Thalia almost reached out to lift his face so she could see his eyes again.

"It was entirely my fault, sir. I am terribly sorry, I wasn't watching where I was going at all," she bent forward and began to help him collect his bags. "You at least had an excuse, trying to carry all these things at once. You should really have made more than one trip, and not over-taxed yourself."

The young man lifted his head again. "You need not call me sir, milady. I'm only a servant. And we aren't really given a choice of what we can or cannot do to make our lives easier." He smiled at her to soften the bitter words and Thalia suddenly wanted to see a real smile from this man.

"What is your name?" she asked as they stood up.

"Eldan," he answered, glancing up at her again. She sensed he wanted to ask her name, but his servant manners were too well ingrained to ask himself. That suited Thalia just fine, as she would rather he just believe that she was a commoner and not know her as the princess.

"Well then, Eldan, to make up for causing you to drop all your packages I am going to help you carry them. Where are you headed to?"

Eldan's eyes grew wide and he shook his head. "No, milady. I can carry them fine on my own, you don't need to trouble yourself in the least." He tried to reach out to take the packages from her but his own arms were already too full of boxes to take any of them from her.

"Nonsense. I was the reason you fell so it is only right that I help you get back to where you are going."

"It is outside of town, milady, and I would not ask you to walk that far with me." He again tried to grab for the bags.

"A compromise then?" she asked. He stopped and looked up at her and Thalia smiled. "I will help you carry them to the edge of town and then let you go the rest of the way on your own. Fair enough?"

Eldan sighed. "I can see I am not going to win this, so then I will agree. To the edge of town and no further." He frowned as he turned away and began walking down the street.

Smiling triumphantly, Thalia hurried to catch up with him. Thalia got him to talk a little bit more about his family and what he did but no matter how she asked, he would not tell her where he was headed or what household he worked for. At the edge of town she handed over the bags and he nodded to her.

"Thank you for helping me this far, milady. I hope the rest of your day is well." He turned to leave but Thalia grabbed his arm, stopping him.

"You don't have to go much further, do you?" she asked, looking at the setting sun in worry.

"Not much further, no, milady," he said looking down and away from her.

Thalia frowned. "The sun is setting and it will be dark soon. The woods are not a safe place to be after dark; will you not let me go back to my townhouse and call a carriage for you?" she



asked, hoping he would say yes.

Eldan quickly shook his head and gently pulled his arm out of her hand. “No, milady, I will be fine. Like I said, I have not much further to go and I will be home before any danger can come upon me. You need not worry for my sake.”

Thalia nodded knowing there was nothing else she could do. “Very well then, have a good night, Eldan. It was nice bumping into you,” she smiled at her joke and Eldan smiled back.

“It was nice to meet you as well, milady,” he paused and then looked back up at her again. “I have never seen you here before, milady. May I assume you have come with Princess Thalia’s escort?”

Thalia smiled at his curiosity. “You may assume so, yes.” She laughed and kissed him on the cheek quickly before rushing off back to the safety of her townhouse where she could dream of a boy with green-flecked gray eyes.

\*\*\*

Eldan sat in his attic room unable to sleep. He had gotten back well after nightfall as he knew he would, but it didn’t seem to matter anymore. Even though Jorin and Gorin had waited up with twin evil grins and nasty words when he entered the house, he hadn’t heard any of it. He just handed them their boxes and bags, which seemed to distract them long enough for him to walk up to his room in a daze.

She had kissed him!

Eldan had never believed in love at first sight, or any love for that matter. But she had kissed him and now he couldn’t get the thought of her out of his head. He was falling in love with a girl whose name he didn’t even know. But he knew she was with the Princess’ entourage, so maybe if he could get in there then he would be able to see her one last time.

He wasn’t kidding himself in thinking that he could convince her to leave her position in the capital and stay with him; he had nothing to give her. He just needed to see her one last time, to maybe thank her for what she had done and to ask her name, to make a memory to last him when she was gone and out of his life for good.

Getting up out of his bed, he crept to his door and opened it a crack, listening to the house, and when all he heard was silence knew that everyone was asleep. Lighting a candle that lay on his table, Eldan slipped out of his room and went down three flights of stairs until he came to the cellar of the house. His mother had used it as a storage area for things that they did not use every day, but Eldan’s step father had converted it into a wine cellar, pushing everything of his mother’s to one corner.

Most of the boxes had mildew creeping up them and did not smell all that pleasant. Placing the candle on a high shelf, Eldan slowly went through the boxes, careful not to disturb anything too much so that it would not fall and alert anyone to his activities. Luckily for him the box he was looking for was near the top of the pile and he was able to pull it out without disturbing any of the others. Opening it, Eldan touched the red brocade suit coat that lay on top; his family had been lower nobility when they were alive.



Taking out his father's best court clothes carefully, Eldan inspected them for moth holes or mildew, but thankfully they only smelled slightly musty, which would be an easy fix once he washed them. Piling the outfit on a nearby chair, he closed the box and replaced it. Then taking up the clothes and candle, he made his way silently into the kitchen to give the old clothes a good scrubbing before he hid them in the closet in his attic room. He went to sleep that night with a smile on his face, knowing that the next night he would see her again and he would learn her name.

\*\*\*

Thalia sat at her table staring down at her breakfast, dreading the coming night and the ball she must attend. She wanted to find a husband and be named heir, it was true. But she also wanted to marry for love.

"Love is for common folk who do not have to worry about politics and treaties," her mother would always say to her sisters and her, but still Thalia wanted love above anything else.

"I know you feel pressured to find a husband, Thalia," Meriel said from across the table with a worried frown, "but I don't want you to sacrifice your heart to get it. If you do choose someone, Thalia, choose a man that you may be able to love one day."

"Love is for common folk, Meri," Thalia said softly, thinking of gray eyes with green flecks in their depth.

"Don't throw mother's words back at me, Lia. I heard them a thousand times a day when I was courting for a husband, it didn't help me find someone, and it's not going to help you either. Just look for someone who you like to talk to, who you have common interests with, not someone who will always be trying to please you for his own gain. Whoever you pick will be King one day, Thalia. He has to have a good heart to rule our people beside you."

"You don't think I know that, Meri. I know all that and more; no one I meet seems good enough," Thalia sighed and put her head in her hands. That had been a lie, there was one who she would like to take back to the capital with her, but dare she tell her sister that she may have fallen in love with a commoner who she had spoken to for only a few minutes?

A hand on her shoulder told Thalia that Meriel had come around the table to her. Looking up, she saw tears in her older sister's eyes and immediately regretted her hard words.

"I'm sorry, Thalia," Meriel said. "Sometimes I forget that it's you going through these things now, and not me."

Thalia sighed and turned around in her chair, hugging her older sister. Meriel had been frantic her last few months before her twenty-third birthing day, asking almost anyone to marry her, she was so desperate. But everyone was too afraid of her magic to see the wonderful person beneath all that power.

"I'm not mad at you, Meri. I'm just frustrated with myself because I'm afraid that whoever I choose will never be good enough to follow after mother and father and rule this country with me; I'm afraid all they'll see is a crown and not the people who we wear that crown for."

Meriel nodded as she backed up from their embrace, wiping her eyes on the sleeve of her gown,



for once not caring about propriety.

“You still have many months until your twenty-third birthing day; there is plenty of time for you to find someone who will suit you and our kingdom.”

“I may have many months left, Meri. But we have already been through all the provinces. If I don’t find someone here then father is going to try to arrange a foreign marriage for me,” Thalia sighed as she thought again of the ball. Hopefully there would be someone there that she could learn to love.

\*\*\*

Eldan waited at the top of his attic stair with the door slightly open as he listened to his step-brothers talking. He waited until he heard them and his step-father leave the house before he went down the stairs and to the front window where he watched them leave in the only carriage they owned. When he was sure they were away he hurried back up to his room and opened his closet.

He had worried that one of his step-brothers would decide to go into his room for whatever reason and would find the clothes; he kept checking on them throughout the day as he ran about the last minute chores and errands that they all sent him on in preparation for the ball.

But no one went to him room, they did not find his father’s newly cleaned court clothes, they did not learn of his plan to go to the ball, they did not even know that when he had gone into town to get the masks for his step-father and brothers that he had ordered one extra for himself and had hidden it under his shirt.

Now taking out the mask and clothes, he quickly dressed and looked at himself in the downstairs hall mirror on his way to the stables. He looked nothing like the servant boy who walked around with his head down all day and did everything he was told; nothing like the shy boy who had been afraid to ask the pretty woman her name.

He wondered if she would know who he was, if he should even tell her that she knew him. But no, if she did not know then she would not treat him as if he were less than herself. It was no problem taking one of the horses out of the stable and riding it to the ball.

He stabled his horse at an inn a few blocks away from the location of the ball and walked to the front doors. He gave his name as Theodan Cinder, his father’s name, and walked into the ball room. All the men from the surrounding province had shown up to dance with the princess.

Eldan ignored all of them, he was not here for the princess. He felt safe behind his mask, even as he saw his step-father and brothers across the dance floor. They would not recognize him in the fancy clothes and mask, so he need not worry about being caught. But as the hour of the princess’s arrival grew closer Eldan began to think that he had come for nothing, for even though there were many other pretty girls and women in the crowd, none were the one he had hoped to see.

Then the Princess was announced and out walked a ravishing beauty in a light blue dress with her golden hair pinned up around her head and her striking blue eyes staring around the crowd as if she were looking for someone. And as those eyes scanned over him, Eldan realized that she was the one he had met the day before. The one woman he had come to the dance to see was



the Princess herself.

Backing up, away from her searching eyes, he contemplated leaving right then and not even trying to dance with her. He got all the way to the doors before he stopped. She didn't know who he was; there was no harm in him having one dance with her. It took him almost all night to get up the courage to approach her and ask her to dance, but he did do it.

She looked at the clock on the wall and nodded tiredly to him. Glancing at the clock himself, Eldan saw that it was nearing midnight and the princess must be tired.

"We could sit for a few moments if you would prefer, your Highness," Eldan said as he offered his arm to her.

She looked up in surprise, but shook her head. "One song, that is all you get. If any of the other men see me with anyone else for more than one song, they will leave, and I can't have them leaving before I can dance with everyone. I have to choose the right man."

Eldan bit his lip to hide a smile. She seemed overly tired and was probably saying more than she should. "We could just sit for one song then?"

Again she looked up at him in surprise. Then she smiled. "What is your name?" she asked in the same way she had asked the day before.

"Theo," he said, remembering to use his father's name.

"Well, then, Theo, I think we should get to our dance. I thank you for the offer to sit, but I'm afraid if I sit now I will never get back up again."

Eldan smiled along with her and bowed as they reached the dance floor. She curtsied and the dance began.

"You dance very well," the Princess said, surprised, and Eldan smiled.

"It was a must growing up with my mother, we may live on the edge of the country and further away from the capital and polite society than anyone else, but mother made sure that we knew how to dance properly."

"We?" she asked, smiling as she listened.

"Father and I," he said. "My father was a horrible dancer before my mother came along."

She smiled and her blue eyes sparkled as they circled the dance floor. Once the dance was over Eldan backed up and bowed to her once again. She curtsied and smiled up at him.

"It was a pleasure to dance with you, sir," she said as she straightened up.

"You need not call me sir, your Highness," he said smiling politely as he backed away from the dance floor, "The pleasure was all mine." He was retreating to the ball room doors as the next man walked in to take his dance, but the Princess walked forward and grabbed his arm. Surprised, Eldan turned back again and met her startled wide blue eyes.

"Eldan," she whispered, and he realized in shock that he had done something to give himself away.

Shaking his head, he pulled out of her grasp and rushed into the crowded hall beyond. He didn't stop until he was two blocks away from the ball and behind a darkened building where no one



would be able to see him. Breathing in deeply, he tore the mask off and buried his face in his hands. How could he have been so careless?

Shaking his head, he hurried to collect his horse and ride back to the house. He was able to get the horse brushed and put back in her stall and his father's clothes returned to their box in the cellar before anyone returned.

When he finally heard the door open he was safe under his threadbare blankets in his old clothes with dirt and tears smudging his once clean face. No one came up to his attic room, so he figured somehow they must not have heard the princess call his name, or she had been so ashamed to have even danced with him that she had kept his identity to herself.

\*\*\*

Thalia paced the floor of her room, biting her lip and muttering to herself. She had slept horribly the night before, her dreams haunted by the man with the gray-green eyes. How could she have danced with him and talked to him and not known it was he? How could she not have heard it in his voice or the way he had spoken of his mother?

"He must not be nobility if he ran from you, Lia. You know father would never allow you to marry a servant boy," Meriel sat in a chair watching Thalia pace and fret.

"I know, Meri. But you didn't see him, you didn't hear the way he talked about his mother."

"He may just have been saying those things, Lia."

"But, why make up a whole family just to impress me for one dance and then run away? And why use a name from a noble family that died out? I just don't understand it." She clutched the crest of the family name Cinder. It wasn't a very well known class of nobility, nor was it a very rich one, but it was still a noble lineage and the crest that she held so tightly had torn from the fine clothes he had been wearing the night before when he ran from her so suddenly.

Meriel sighed and stood up. "Come, Thalia," she said as she walked out of the room.

Thalia stopped and turned to her sister. "Where are we going?"

"I wasn't going to say anything, but I see this will not be resolved until we see the man and talk to him ourselves," Meriel threw on a cloak over her dress.

"But, Meri, we don't even know where he lives."

"I had someone look up the last known residence for that family crest, we can start there."

"Meri? How long have you known this?"

"Calm, sister, I have only known a little over a candlemark."

"But you were not going to tell me about it, were you?"

Meriel looked at her sadly. "No, I was not, but if he is your one we have to find out who he is."

Thalia hugged her sister. "Thank you, Meri. Just give me one moment. I have to change."

"Change, but the dress you have on now is perfectly fine."

"I'm not going to be wearing a dress when I see him again," Thalia smiled as she went to her closet to dig out the pants and shirt she had worn the day before, when they had first met.



Eldan had taken a bucket to the well out back when he heard the sounds of horses and men coming from around the front of the house. Peeking around the edge of the building, he saw a contingent of knights on horseback with the Princess and another woman out front. They stopped in the front of the house and dismounted. Thalia and the other woman handed their reins to another of the riders and approached the house with two knights.

The door opened and Eldan could hear Gorin and Jorin talking at once as they invited the Princess in and told her how nice it was to see her again. Biting his lip, Eldan ducked back behind the house and, leaving the bucket next to the well, hurried within the safety of the barn. He would have to stay there until she left so he wouldn't be seen.

"You know, it's rude not to greet a guest when they come to your house?"

Eldan spun around and looked on with wide eyes as the princess walked into the barn. She stopped when she was a few paces away and looked up at him with her blue eyes accusing.

"Your Highness?" he asked, not sure what he should say or what she wanted of him.

She shook her head. "Right now, I am not the princess. I am just the woman who ran into you in the street and helped you with your bags." Eldan looked down to see that she was indeed wearing the same clothes he had met her in.

"You were never just that, milady," he said, backing away when she took a step toward him.

"No? Then what was I, Eldan?" she stepped forward again and his back hit one of the stable doors when he backed up another step.

He shook his head. "Why are you here?" he asked, glancing over her shoulder in the direction of the house.

"Don't worry, my sister is distracting them. I'm here for you, Eldan," she said, her lips so close that their noses touched when he turned to look back at her.

"Me? But I'm nothing special," he said, looking away.

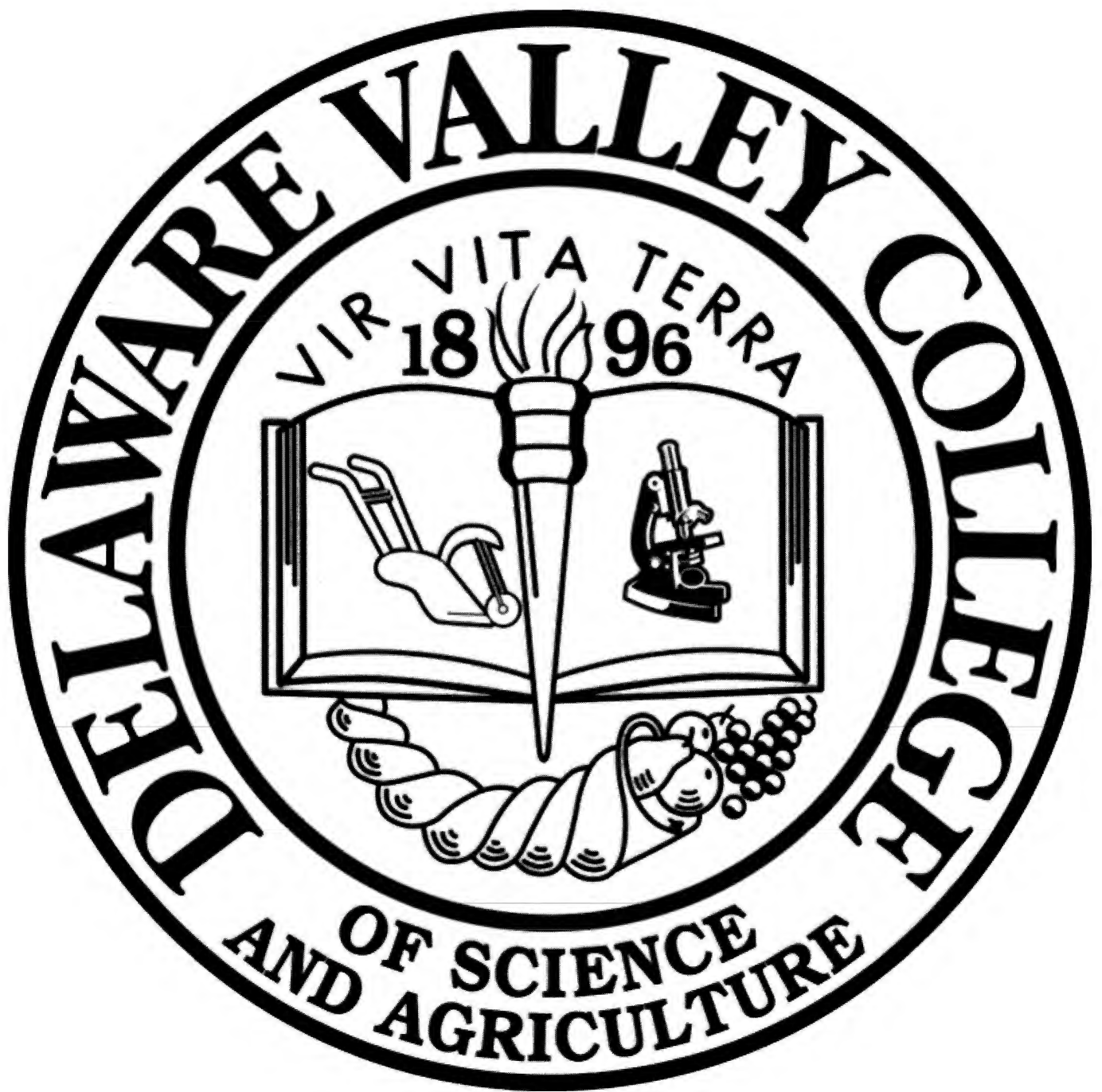
She nodded. "Oh, you're very special. You're what I've been looking for, Eldan, but I have a question first." He looked into her eyes again when she didn't continue. She held out the crest that had ripped from his coat when he had run from her. "Is this your family?" she asked.

He took it and smoothed it out on his palm. His father's crest, his crest. "Yes," he told her. "It was my father's."

"And now it is yours," she said placing her hands on either side of his face, "And you are mine, Eldan."

When she kissed him it wasn't just on the cheek; this time their lips touched in a real kiss. Eldan brought his arms up and wrapped them around her waist, pulling her close and deepening the kiss. From now and ever after she would be His Princess.









The English Department is very happy to have sponsored its sixteenth high school writing competition, which was designed to showcase the work of young writers in the area.



## The Cat Thief

Corvus opened his eyes and stood. He walked over to the small brown ferret and poked him gently. "Freddy, get up," he snapped. The ferret's eyes snapped open and he scampered up, through Corvus's black fur onto his usual position atop Corvus's shoulder. The cat glanced around suspiciously, his green eyes darting from side to side, then took off, running towards the town in the distance.

Their trainer, a tall, thin man with sandy brown hair had assigned them a mission that morning. They would enter the castle of the King and steal the dragon ruby from the treasury. Though Corvus was a thief, he felt no remorse or guilt from his actions. He believed that things should be taken from the rich and given to those who had less. If the government wouldn't do it, then ordinary citizens had to step up and take charge. Corvus stalked through the town, Freddy resting comfortably on his shoulders. They slipped easily through the outer wall and made their way to the castle, a towering behemoth that dwarfed the tiny shacks next to it.

Corvus walked to the back gates of the castle and sat down. He tilted his head backwards and let out a piercing yowl.

Seconds later, the ornate gates swung open. An enormous she-wolf stood behind them.

"Lunar," Corvus said, dipping his head in greeting.

"Corvus," Lunar said, repeating the gesture. "Come on." She turned and walked into the castle, Corvus and Freddy at her heels.

Lunar was the inside information. She had worked out a system for opening the gate from the inside and had a secret passage to get from inside the woods into the castle, but she refused to reveal it to anyone. She was also their guide and worked out how to get to the treasury without being captured.

Corvus stared around at the beautifully decorated walls, covered in huge images of the previous Kings and queens. "This place is sickening," he muttered. "One of these paintings could buy food for half the Kingdom. They have more than they could ever need. Even their animals are spoiled. I would hate to be a simple palace pet"

Freddy chattered agreeably. "I don't know," Lunar said. "I hear they have some pretty nice diamond collars. Those might be nice" Lunar noticed the disgusted expression on Corvus's face "Sorry." They continued silently through the castle.

"Hide," Lunar suddenly hissed. She was staring down the corridor, ears pricked, standing perfectly still. Corvus jumped behind a small table and Freddy scampered into a tiny hole in the wall. Lunar pressed herself against the wall, getting as close to it as she could.

Two guards dressed in red walked around the corner. Corvus glanced nervously at Lunar, who wasn't really hidden. However, the two guards passed by without so much as a glance towards the wall where Lunar was. Corvus felt his fur prickle with suspicion.

"How come they didn't notice you?" Corvus asked, stepping out from behind the table. Freddy came out from the hole in the wall and climbed back onto Corvus's shoulder.

"I don't know," Lunar said, looking surprised. "What a lucky break." She turned and trotted off down the hallway and walked down the stairs that led to the dungeon.

They slipped through the dungeon, staying close to the floor. Corvus looked



around the dungeon. It was a grim place. The only light came from small torches that lit the walls and the air was filled with the screams and cries of the prisoners. Corvus pulled his ears back and increased his pace. At the same time, Lunar slowed down and started scuffing at the ground and making small yipping noises.

"What are you doing?" Corvus asked. "Hurry up, we're almost there." Lunar looked up and shook herself.

"Sorry, sorry," she said, running to join them. "Yep, this is it. We're here." They looked up at the small hole that would lead them into the treasury. "I'm not going to be able to get up there, much less fit through that." Lunar said.

"That's okay," Corvus said. "Go on Freddy." The ferret jumped off Corvus's shoulder and raced up the wall and vanished through the hole. A second later he poked his head back out.

"We're good," he squeaked. "There's no one up there." Freddy's head vanished back out of the hole.

Corvus jumped up onto the wall, digging his claws in so that he wouldn't fall down again. He squeezed through the hole then turned and looked down at Lunar. "See you later, Lunar," Corvus said, then turned to the treasure. There were stacks of gold coins all over the floor. The gems were in several different piles, each one color coordinated. Corvus walked over the red pile. "Freddy, do you see anything," Corvus asked without turning around. There wasn't an answer. "Freddy?" Corvus asked, starting to feel a little nervous. There was a sudden scream that sounded a lot like Freddy and a falcon's cry. Corvus looked up in time to see a large bird fly above him with a limp ferret in its claws.

"Freddy," Corvus whispered, then dove for the hole back to the dungeons. There was nothing he could do for his friend now. The only thing he could do now was save himself. Before he could reach his way out, he felt a piercing pain and he was thrown sideways into a stack of coins. They crashed down on top of him. Corvus slowly struggled out from underneath them. He could feel a terrible pain in his chest and he could feel the warm wetness of blood spreading down his front. His vision blurred and he collapsed. He looked up and saw Lunar, blood dripping from her jaws, staring down at him expressionlessly as a castle guard wrapped a diamond collar around her neck.

Corvus closed his eyes and he took his last breath.

The Cat Thief was written by Rebecca Thompson. She is in 9th grade at Voorhees High School in Mrs. Stine's class.



# Classifieds

Found:

three-piece set:

cynicism,

pragmatism,

disillusionment.

Please claim within

next 30 days,

or finder will take possession

of all items.

---{ + }---

Lost:

naïveté,

optimism,

somewhere en route

between exit 7

(Utopia)

and exit 13

(Here).

If found,

please return.

---{ + }---

Announcement:

time limit on

three-piece set

has expired.

The items are

no longer available

to be claimed.

---{ + }---

Wanted:

an explanation.

“Classifieds” was written by Addie Schlussel. She is in 12th grade at Archbishop Wood High School in Mr. Zoccola’s class.



They look at me with eyes full of tears. You're not the one that should be crying, it's my family that falling apart, not yours. They all say, "I'm sorry," I return with a limp, "Thanks," and then turn around and roll my eyes. If I had a penny for every time I heard those two words, I would be a millionaire.

My family could be on one of those corny commercials, with the perfect family all sharing a meal around a large table in a farmhouse in the country. We used to be that family. My mom would walk into a PTA meeting and all the other moms would whisper to themselves, "I wish I could be like her," just loud enough so that the others couldn't hear. Her hair, her makeup, and her clothes, she never let anyone see her any way but perfect, even us. My dad always was bragging at work about his amazing wife and kids. We were a picture perfect family, all four of us. Now, not so much.

My sister, Atty, and I were raised in Jersey our whole lives. This is the only place I've ever been able to call home. We vacationed at the Jersey shore every summer and lived the rest of the year in a small yellow farmhouse in the middle of nowhere, I'm not exaggerating. I was raised practically in the middle of a cornfield. I went to school with the same forty kids I had gone through kindergarten with, and we were all the same. We wore Abercrombie and Uggs. It was almost like a uniform. Occasionally, someone would wear a t-shirt from Niagara Falls or Disney, or wherever they had recently traveled to. I really hate writing all this crap about what life used to be like, but it's better than having to sit here and tell my shrink. She just sits there in that weird grey sweater, buttoned a few buttons too high, god forbid she can't breathe and passes out. I don't know if I would get up and help, or just point and laugh, well, I probably would laugh first, then eventually help her. I'm supposed to be "spelling out my feelings about my family and how I have reacted to my life in the past few years." But it would make no sense to tell you about all of my problems if you didn't get to know me a teeny bit. My name is Cat, I'm thirteen. My sister is fourteen and her name is Atty.

Atty and I sat at a table in the study, doing homework. I was drinking a tall glass of cherry coke and Atty had water, too many calories in soda, but she would just whine in that high pitch voice, "It's healthier," dragging out the rrrrr a little too long. Mom had a doctor's appointment and dad was still at work. I sat there sipping my coke and holding the liquid in my mouth until it began to sting my tongue. Mom walked in. Her hair was messed up, and it drew a lot of attention because it was always so perfect. She sat down next to me; I looked closer at her face and saw thin black rivers running down her foundation plated cheeks. That was the day we found out my mom, the perfect mom, had breast cancer.

She didn't want anyone to know, so she wore a wig. Besides the fact that I have a big mouth, you would have never known. I went into the guidance counselor's office the next week and told her bluntly, "I'm gonna have a lot of problems," She was new, and maybe I shouldn't have scared her with my-moms-going-to-die-and-you-have-to-help-me-convince-myself-she isn't on her third day of being a guidance counselor. Well, her problems weren't as bad as mine were going to get.

My mom was in chemo therapy and treatment for a few months. She had one week on and one week off, but she always felt horrible. That was the worst time, moms who I didn't even know their kids were showing up at our doorstep with dinners and stuff. I don't want your pity, or your food. As I said, they were all sorry; sorry doesn't get rid of cancer. Mom conquered it after 8 months of harsh medicines and chemo, or we thought. I sat with Atty at the table in the study. I was eating a peanut butter and jelly sandwich and Oreos. Atty had the



same snack, I had made one for each of us, but there was only one bite out of the sandwich, and the Oreos lay untouched. "Too unhealthy," she pushed the plate toward me with her spider-like hand. I stared at her face, which was bony and pale. Mom was coming home from a scan with dad, just to make sure the cancer was totally gone. I was hoping for her to walk in with a smile on her face, and that glow to be emanating from her as well. There was no smile and no glow. The treatment had failed and the cancer had spread to her liver and various other places around her body.

Her liver began to fail, and so did our hope. Her body began to fill with a liquid that her liver was creating. No one could do anything but try to make her more comfortable. She had days, weeks, maybe a month if we were really lucky.

My sister, all of 75 pounds, was anorexic, and my mom was losing the battle with cancer. My life sucked, or that's what everyone was trying to convince me. To some extent it did, I was watching two family members wither away, disregarding any of our attempts to help them.

I still can't get into details about watching my mom fade away in front of my eyes, but I can tell you this. My mom lost the battle with cancer one year and seven months ago. My sister got help after mom died and she is normal now, or as normal as she will ever be; remember she's my sister.

Whenever I tell my story to anyone they always give me hugs and say those two stupid words... I'm sorry... I'm so sorry... I'm sorry too, to all those people that have said that to me. They have no idea how glad I am that it was me, that I was affected. I'm not happy everything had to end up as it did, but it shaped me into a person I am proud to be. It probably sounds really cheesy, but I'm happy. Misery, Sadness, and Agony all took a large clump of blackened coal into their hands, and shaped it into a beautiful flower which could withstand all four seasons.

*They shaped me.*

This story was written by Ana Mancini. She is in 10th grade at Voorhees High School in Ms. Imhof's class.



# Oh, the Mall!

I was barely eleven when I came to understand what Cher Horowitz meant when she said her “only direction in life is towards the mall”. She certainly wasn’t “Clueless”.

The sights. The sounds. The smells.  
The shops. The shoes.  
Waiting until Friday. The anticipation.  
Who was going? Where would we shop?  
It didn’t matter.  
Oh, the mall!  
Entering through Bloomingdales.  
Traversing the crowds. A sea of people.  
All the colors. Clothes. Cosmetics.  
Mac. Kiehl’s. Urban Decay.  
What a fabulous day!  
The spray of perfumes like mist off a waterfall.  
Oh, the mall!  
All the stores. So hard to choose.  
No way to lose.  
Racks of clothes. Jam packed.  
Shoes eyeing me from across a store.  
Size zero jeans mocking me.  
The caching of cash registers  
soothing me.

Oh, the mall!  
Coupons. Math.  
Singing on escalators. Silence.  
Bumping into people. Hiding.  
Long lines. Empty.  
Sweltering hot. Cold.  
Oh, the mall!  
So tired it hurts to stand. Can’t walk another foot.  
But, the food court.  
Energy back.  
A swirl of people.  
Babies crying. Moms yelling.  
Teenagers being obnoxious.  
So loud.  
Blenders making smoothies. Sounding like a symphony.  
Chinese food trays steaming. Hitting me like a sauna.  
Full. Content. Happy.  
Oh, the mall!

“Oh, the Mall!” was written by Kate Franklin. She is in 9th grade at Council Rock High School South in Mr. Kusters class.



## *Is Our Constitution Still Relevant?*

*Go to any local elementary school and ask any sixth grader to recite for you the preamble to the United States Constitution. Chances are they'll proudly recite for you the lines that have been drilled into their heads by their teachers with the aid of a catchy song from Schoolhouse Rock. But these lines are far more important than any old nursery rhyme: they set forth the goals of the American founding fathers as they prepared to craft a Constitution for a new, fledgling republic which had recently defeated a world superpower in a war for independence. Indeed, the founding fathers were majorly successful in constructing a constitution. To this day, the American constitution retains much of its relevance due not to the specifics of the laws and systems it created, but due to the fundamental principles which it set out to protect and preserve for future generations. When we use the Constitution as a basis for modern government, it is important to remember that while technology and ideas have changed over the past 225 years, the fundamental concepts of liberty and enfranchisement have not.*

*The line between which parts of the Constitution are to be taken literally and which parts are open to interpretation is anything but crystal clear. It is practically impossible, however, to make the argument that the original wording of the Constitution is inflexible. In 1787, only white, male property owners who were twenty-one years of age or older had universal suffrage. To the disappointment of several of the founding fathers, the Constitution had also failed to address the issue of slavery, an issue which would be a major cause of a bloody civil war. The Constitution was created in a polarized political atmosphere, with voices ranging from the staunchly libertarian Thomas Jefferson to the strong supporter of centralized government, John Adams. The founding fathers were far from being of a single political mindset, and hardly could have imagined the technological and societal changes which would take place over the next two centuries. Many changes would be made to the Constitution while the men who had helped to craft it were still alive and politically active; twelve amendments were passed by 1804. It is only healthy, then, that the words of the founding fathers, men who have been lionized in American history, should be open to interpretation and debate. The wisdom of the Constitution and its writers must not be forgotten, but it also must be crafted to fit a 21<sup>st</sup> century American society which in many ways no longer resembles the American society in which the Constitution was crafted.*

*While individual laws and systems set forth in the Constitution are and should be open to debate and subject to change, it is important that we as a modern nation remember the spirit of the Constitution. In spite of their varying political ideologies, the founding fathers all shared the common belief that government should be of, by, and for the people. In such an enfranchised system of government, we the people have a responsibility to educate ourselves on political matters in order to make informed choices in the voting booth. James Madison wisely stated that “a*



*well-instructed people alone can be permanently a free people,” and this statement is more relevant than ever in the United States. Perhaps the greatest danger to a republican system of government is ignorance. Throughout history, the ignorance of the masses has allowed for freedoms to erode and tyrants to rise to power. In 1930’s Germany, the German people, plagued by hard economic times, were quick to listen to a charismatic leader named Adolf Hitler when he promised a way out of their situation. Tyranny and oppression do not take over a nation overnight: they gradually take hold over an uneducated populace. Perhaps the most important lesson the Constitution and its writers have for us today is to stay informed and stay vigilant. Ignorance is the enemy of freedom.*

*The Constitution was written by men with no knowledge of the modern world. When the founding fathers thought of gun control, they didn’t have automatic weapons. When they thought of regulation of commerce, there were no multinational corporations. When they imagined freedom of the press, they could have never envisioned a world in which information can travel around the world in seconds. The reason why this centuries old document is so important lies in its fundamental values of enfranchisement and freedom. The vision the founding fathers had for America can only survive if the American people ensure that it does. If we forget about the Constitution, we have chosen to follow the path of ignorance, and the path of ignorance leads directly to tyranny.*

*“Is Our Constitution Still Relevant?” was written by Adam Davis. He is in 11th grade at Council Rock High School South in Mrs. Alves’ class.*



## *“Inside of Time”*

*The round edges*

*Have no end.*

*I sit on the corner of 7,*

*Must be careful of the ticking hands.*

*Here, no one can see in to us.*

*Sometimes I run along the tick marks,*

*Wondering how these little lines*

*Take hold and claim the lives of all.*

*The concept of this device consumes all people,*

*Except the ones inside it, like you,*

*And me.*

*You see, the world believes that time is limited,*

*An intangible idea no one can grasp, and take hold in their hands.*

*But us,*

*We know the truth, sitting here at the corner of 7,*

*We have all the time in the world.*

*“Inside of Time” was written by Jacquelyn Cobb. She is in 10th grade at Voorhees High School and is in Ms. Imhof’s class.*



## Gold-Leaf

You glow like the gold of autumn  
Like endless honeycomb columns

And I fall like folly for you  
Like old leaves making way for new

You shine like the taste of summer  
For love-makers and song-hummers

And I fall like folly for you  
Like fallen blossoms, pink and blue

You glisten like the tears of spring  
Like many rippled water rings

And I fall like folly for you  
Like pouring rain and earthly hues

You burn like the glitter of snow  
Like the transgressions of a crow

And I fall like folly for you  
Like all the secrets I once knew

“Gold Leaf” was written by Sian Carter. He is in 11th grade at Governor Mifflin High School in Mr. Glen Martin’s class.



## "Like So Many Fireflies"

*Rupert Brooke (1887-1915) was an English poet, noted for his boyish good looks (W. B. Yeats reportedly called him the handsomest man in Europe) and his poetry that drew on themes of love, war, and nationalism.*

It's so easy for those guys the Rupert  
Brookes to rub words together and make  
fire Rupert Brooke was that guy who  
guessed I bet on every True/  
False question on the test and  
got 'em all correct who  
never missed a step even  
falling and cracking (dully, unheroically)  
open his head to release  
light like fireflies  
out of a jar

looking deep downward to the damned souls  
in the River Styx does he see what  
he dares not half-hope  
for (an old grudge, an  
enemy of war)  
or instead his own reflection?  
ah, but there's the almighty catch—  
even a river is only a river

no matter how mythical even he  
can only release so many snatches of  
coiled heat  
-a solid burst of that ghost language  
can carry by half's a gasping breath—  
with words, pinned gently to its chest  
a batch of orphan words, a clutch of abandoned eggs:  
*a tight spiral*  
*like so many fireflies*  
*into the night*

*"Like So Many Fireflies" was written by Rachel Adler. She is in 11th grade at Abington Friends School in Mary Lynn Ellis' class.*





*The Gleaner is published during the academic year by Delaware Valley College students. The Gleaner is a student publication and the opinions expressed within are not necessarily those of the staff or administration. Neither the College nor staff will assume responsibility for plagiarism unknowingly occurring within.*



